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THE
HISTORY
OF
Miss PITTBOROUGH.

In a SERIES of LETTERS.

By a LADY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed for A. MILLAR, and T. CADELL, in
the Strand; and J. JOHNSON and Co. in
Pater-noster Row.

MDCCLXVII.

H*KLAUSING.

HISTORICAL

OF

MR. PITT-RIVERS

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

TO

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME



H. K. LUSING.

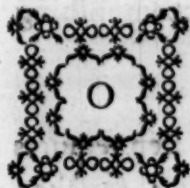


THE
HISTORY
OF
MISS PITTBOROUGH.



LETTER I.

MISS HUTCHENS to MISS BINFIELD.



My dear girl, the crisis is at length passed, and Miss Pittborough as wretched a thing as either you or I could wish her. But my happiness, notwithstanding, is rather incomplete. Methinks it would be the highest pleasure, to be an eye-witness of her flouncing

and bouncing; for I am persuaded her entanglement will fit very uneasy upon her.

I followed your directions literally with respect to enflaming her pride, by well-timed conversations with my Betty, who is as sly and artful a young woman, as any she in Christendom.

We dissembled the greatest apprehensions lest she should obtain a knowledge of what we so judiciously prepared for her ear; and so little difficulty did we find in working upon those lively passions of her heart, vanity and self-sufficiency, that she even went before us in accomplishing her own mortification.

But what must be our next step requires consideration: the colonel has forsaken our house, and, in order to effectually remove himself from objects that are become disgustful to him (amongst which number
is

MISS PITTBOROUGH. 3

is your unfortunate friend) is immediately going abroad ; never more perhaps to return.

Surely no man alive was so infatuated ; notwithstanding all the ill treatment he met with previous to the grand absurdity of her elopement, nor the elopement itself, have been able to shake his unexampled affection : he pursued her with all the expedition money or impatience could procure ; but having been amused by my dexterity with an opinion during a whole day, that she was only gone out with my mother, all possibility of overtaking her was cut off. Well, after all, if I am to be so unhappy as to remain excluded his approbation, it is infinite consolation, that I have prevented some folks, with all their haughty coquettish perfections, from being united to him.

How amazingly fickle and perverse are those incidents of which Mrs. Fortune is

supposed to have the regulation ! A blessing shall frequently and repeatedly fall into one person's lap, though as repeatedly brush'd off and disregarded, which another dies with misery from being unable to obtain.—And can there be any blessing superior to colonel Dingley's love ?—So handsome, so brave, so completely formed for pleasing a youthful heart !—But he is lost to me, most irretrievably lost :—yet I fear I can never wholly subdue an attachment, that has been productive only of pain and vexation.

I wonder what lady Sanxfey will do with herself :—she can never have the confidence to appear in town, at least till the matter is somewhat blown over ; and I am sensible the country is her aversion. How small and ridiculous she must feel, when she condescends to contemplate her husband's sweet person (especially as comparisons will be apt to suggest themselves) ; and a husband she will find him in the
most

most rigid sense of the word. Pride, pride, has, indeed, met with a severe fall ; but I have hope, it will prove an useful lesson of instruction to her :—and if giddiness and vanity were her only faults, as all her bright admirers seem to be convinced, in all probability I shall live to see her Perfection's self ; for if she will but renounce the one, I can trust the baronet for reducing the other.

I wrote an account of her slippery conduct to her rustic relations ; and, would you believe it, have thereby incurred their mortal displeasure.—But it is pretty plain she has painted me in most unfavourable colours, and that prejudice is at the bottom of their undue dissatisfaction.—Would I had no greater misfortune to cope with, my philosophy would then approve itself as unquestionable as unshaken !

My mother has contracted the utmost gloom upon the occasion, grieves for the

colonel's sufferings, yet pities the insolent cruel author of them. Ah ! had her own miserable child acted a similar part, resentment, not compassion, would have been her portion. Strange ! that we can forgive in a common relation or friend, what we should deem unpardonable in our immediate offspring.

My cousin could not have chosen a more lucky (or, as some people would call it, unlucky) period for her elopement, if she is averse to observation and censure ; for there happening to have been a dearth of scandal for a whole preceding week, she has been mauled with unspeakable severity. Yet I believe there is more of justice than acrimony in this proceeding ; for as she was expected to surpass all the rest of her sex as much in the beauty of her mind, as she had the reputation of doing in her person, you know, to be detected in such an abominable trip, was sufficient to excite amazement, and universal condemnation.

MISS PITTBOROUGH. 7

I now more than ever sigh for your company ; the world should afford pleasure for our public hours, and her ladyship has kindly secured us from finding a void even in our greatest retirement.

Indeed, my dear, as your father's health still continues, without either rhyme or reason, in the same strange indeterminate state as when I left you, I could almost be so uncharitable as to suspect, there is more of humour than real disorder in the case ; however, you must allow me to say, that, at best, there is an equal share of the one and the other. How can he be so unreasonable as to require you to waste your bloom in an obscurity, which, if one may judge of his past disposition by his present conversation, would have been altogether insupportable to himself in his day of youth and vivacity ?

If he is disgusted with courts and courtiers, can he expect that your blood should

receive the unnatural contagion? Upon my word, if I had such a father to deal with, I would soon cure him of burying me alive:—but do not let this sally of friendly dissatisfaction give you the least offence, as I am far from meaning to insinuate the most distant reflection upon your spirit or resolution, and only seek to relieve an overcharged mind, overcharged with mortification by the disappointment of its wishes. Accept my best thanks for the service you have done me, and let me soon receive your congratulations.

LET-



LETTER II.

Lady SANXSEY to Mrs. BATSON.

O My dear Nancy, tell me no more of the impropriety of a subject I must ever pursue; my big heart would burst, if it was not for this relief. I will be upon my guard with every other person, but into your bosom I must pour my undisguised sentiments.

Can any situation have such horrors as mine?—To live with the man I detest—to suffer—but I will think no more of it.—Where is that amiable, that injured colonel?—does he not despise me as I deserve?—can he ever bear—But what is that to me?—it is necessary for my peace, it is necessary for my reputation, that I should

should never see him more. Yet methinks it would be a great satisfaction to know his sentiments. — Can he mention me without curses—though it is not in his nature to curse even his greatest enemy?—Will he ever be so far master of himself as to make another choice—and entertain her with the tale of my ill-treatment of him? — That, that would be a stroke which would level me with the earth.

But no: he is too generous, too humane, to ridicule the unfortunate. It would not be essential to the promotion of his interest—and he could never make it his sport.—Oh! I have given him a sufficient antidote against my whole sex:—He will not in a hurry approve again;—at least, that calamity must be at a distance.

What say you, my sister?—If he was so entirely attached as I had reason to believe; if he could not only pardon all the effects

effects of my folly, but unite himself to them for ever ;—can he love again? can his heart so far shake off my remembrance, as to receive a new impression? Surely it must be impossible. No other object could engage my affections. I am indeed giddy, but not capable of playing the general lover.—He was the first of his sex I ever did approve, and his image will never be effaced from my breast, whilst animation remains.—My God ! I am married—yet dare to make this confession. But the truth of it is most incontestible, however blameably divulged.—The secret is too considerable for me to contain, and without your participation I should sink beneath its weight.

Sir Matthew has rose extremely in my good opinion within these last four-and-twenty hours, as compassion for my sufferings seems to have subdued the pride of his heart, and he has condescended to sooth, instead of reproaching me. This
behaviour

behaviour shall have proper merit with me ; I will endeavour to become sensible of the really difficult task it is upon such an occasion to act with generosity. The shock his vanity must have sustained, and the weeping, almost lifeless companion he has hitherto found me, was more than sufficient to render him morose and unfriendly ; and if he will forget the indiscretion that has thrown me into his power, I will pass an act of oblivion upon all his succeeding words and actions.

But, my dear, dear Nancy, can I ever reconcile myself to his narrowness of mind, defective understanding, and that want of tenderness that is evident in his nature ?—Is this the companion I must prefer to all his sex ?—You, my thrice happy sister, sensibly experience the felicity arising from the union of the heart : Are you not prepared from an affectionate desire of pleasing, to comply with every request or proposition ? do you not behold

hold your husband's countenance with approbation and delight?—are not his endearments both acceptable and grateful to you?—Judge, judge then of the wretched contrast.

Sir Matthew has a seat within twelve miles of Portsmouth, to which place I have intreated him to convey me, no less for his reputation sake, than the recovery of (at least) my outward composure. I have represented to him, with how improper a grace we should make our appearance in the polite world, under my present depression of spirits; and that by indulging me in that trifling particular, he would intitle himself to my chearful acquiescence with his future commands.

He did indeed consent to gratify my inclination, but a denial from many persons, would have been infinitely more engaging:—though it could not perhaps be otherwise—as his sentiments were far from correspond-

corresponding with mine :—He gave up a point, and I ought to be content.

I shall expect once more to hear from you before we quit this place ; and if you have either love, pity, or charity—you know my meaning—therefore deal me out some consolation.

LET-



LETTER III.

Mrs. BATSON to Lady SANXSEY.

I Am afraid, my dear sister, that the measures you are pursuing for the recovery of your peace, will be far from answering your expectations. What charm do you expect to find in solitude to compose your dissatisfactions? Believe me, you will only increase them.—We may lose our wretchedness for a moment in a crowd:—but in retirement it will ever cleave to us.

Why, my love, will you perpetually harp upon a string, that you are sensible can never produce harmony, and without being of the least advantage to yourself, is so utterly displeasing to me?

Your

Your own breast will find you sufficient employment to regulate, to repress every unworthy suggestion, and to cultivate and cherish such as are judicious and valuable—why will you then seek to increase your difficulties? Are not your hands tied up? your power limited? nay even your compassion cannot be too sparingly bestowed: your mind must be hardened into propriety, and every soft, every deluding sensation guarded against with the utmost vigilance. Is it not madness to feed an already desperate distemper?

But in order to silence you for ever upon so improper a subject, I will inform you, that I have received a very satisfactory account of that person's health, you so much wished me to enquire after: he bears his late disappointment with all manly resolution, and wisely determines to leave a country (for at least a short period) where his fortune has been so unfavourable. May happiness and success be

his attendants, and the cruel shock he sustained this day fortnight, the very last that may ever fall to his share !

I now insist upon his never more being mentioned ; it is criminal, it is odious to know one man the master of your hand, and voluntarily suffer another to be master of your heart—Be assured I will on no consideration be accessory to keeping a passion alive, that must be extinguished, or my affection will become the forfeit : calamities will ever endear you to my heart, but guilt infallibly exclude you.



LETTER IV.

Lady SANXSEY to Mrs. BATSON.

MY dear agreeable false prophet,
 how do I congratulate both you
 and myself on the invalidity of your pre-
 dictions! The country an unfit place
 for me at this juncture! my election of
 it injudicious! you was never so out in
 your conjectures. It was undoubtedly
 under the influence of my happy stars
 that I resolved to take the journey, as I
 have derived a happiness from it that
 crowded cities could never have afforded
 me.

Oh Nancy, do not chide me, nor
 suffer your ever friendly brow to be con-
 tracted; at least until you have read a
 faithful

faithful account of the whole transaction—so take it in due form, as it really happened.

Sir Matthew and myself, after a most disagreeable journey—misery the companion of my breast, and mortified pride rankling in his—reached this most deplorable of mansions: The hand of time is every where conspicuous on the mouldering walls;—moths have for years uninterruptedly preyed upon the furniture;—owls, rooks, daws, and every species of ominous creatures seem to claim it for their own.

A house-keeper incomparably well suited to the antiquity of the place:—but I will not oppress you with hideous descriptions.

The third day after our arrival, Sir Matthew made an excursion, to what place, or upon what occasion, I never gave myself the trouble to enquire; but

absent he informed me he should be until the evening.

Relieved from my greatest mortification, I began to cast about for some means of amusing myself:—to little purpose;—for amusement and this mansion I found were incompatible: I therefore determined to order the chaise, and take a solitary view of the country. I did so—telling the man to drive me any where, within ten or twelve miles, that would afford me the most agreeable prospect.

I had travelled about an hour, without finding the desired dissipation, when the beating of drums communicated a throbbing to my heart.—The horses, as the sound was sudden, began to run restive. The man advised me to alight, but my neck was not of such consequence to me, as for me to be willing to preserve it, by foregoing so pleasing a sight as I promised myself (a red coat being a feast my eyes had

had long vainly fought for); and therefore I ordered him to go on as he intended, for I was not at all afraid.

He obeyed without farther hesitation, and at the winding of the road turned full upon a little army of men, marching with all military parade. The startled horses were pleased to take a bank—the chaise over-turned—but as the braces were dexterously cut by the sword of a valiant knight, your sister escaped every bad consequence.

The poor post-boy was indeed considerably hurt, and the attending servant would have been puzzled which first to assist, his mistress or the disabled party, had not a hero-like figure approached the chaise to the relief of the former; who, miserably frightened by the accident, but much more by the object before her, most conveniently fainted, as it concealed other emotions.

At length, however, she revived:— but unable to support the surprize of finding herself in colonel Dingley's arms, she a second time closed her eyes, from incommunicable sensations, not insensibility.

A little cottage that was fortunately situated near the road-side received us: the poor fellow bled shockingly, and the other was dispatched for a surgeon, whilst the hospitable owner of this uncouth retreat presented your friend with a cordial of her husband's preparing.

A matted chair (preferable at that instant to a throne) proved a comfortable support, and the compassionate colonel, forgetting to quit a hand he had for some time held between his with the most friendly apprehension for my safety (tho' as I was tolerably well recovered, it was then evidently rather matter of civility than necessity) placed himself upon a bench that stood commodiously contiguous;

ous: never was tenderness more finely depicted!

I was however, at length, so unhappy as to recollect the impropriety of the appearance, and by attempting to withdraw my hand from the colonel's, awakened his apprehension likewise.—His countenance pierced me to the soul;—he clasped his hands together—and turning from me—— It was a bitter moment.

A silence ensued; a silence that spoke the anguish of our hearts.

“I, Sir, am obliged to your care—
“unmerited—un——” “Spare me, ma-
“dam, cried he, rising hastily, madness
“and recollection are with me the same
“thing—I am—but you must—it cannot
“be recalled—therefore—” He with-
drew with great precipitation into a miser-
able shed or out-house, and did not re-
turn until the surgeon arrived.

The good woman, with a consideration no other person was capable of, told me, that if I would please to follow her I might avoid the disagreeable sight of the poor fellow's wounded head and arm—"She
" had a little chamber, though but a little one, and if his honour would please
" to go with me and partake of such cheer as her hovel afforded, he should
" not go dinnerless that day howsoever.
" —God bless him, he was a noble looking gentleman, and she only wished
" her poor dear Matt (her son, who it
" seems was a soldier) was under his
" command—but God's will must be
" done."

I attempted to avail myself of this very agreeable offer, as it was neither decent nor eligible for me to continue where I was, but found myself unable to move. A trembling seized me:—The colonel was not in a much better condition:—and I was indebted to the surgeon, who conveyed me in his arms.

He was for breathing a vein (as he politely phrased it); but I insisted upon his taking due care of my servant, before he bestowed any upon me.

The scene became more and more interesting.—We were alone:—the colonel unable to utter one syllable, and you may judge of my mortified and afflicted condition. “I know not, sir, whether to lament or rejoice at the accident that has thus unexpectedly thrown me in your way,—as I am sensible your opinion of me must be very unfavourable —but—”

“My opinion, my dear madam, cried he eagerly, is by no means unworthy of you. However you may have been mistaken, I am convinced you had premeditated no evil design against me; it was our mutual misfortune that I was a day too late in my pursuit, by a cruel deception Miss Hutchens was pleased

“pleased to practise;—and to that cir-
“cumstance alone I impute all I have,
“and may hereafter suffer.”

Unfeeling girl! little did I suspect her
to have been the cause of my most fatal
disappointment.

“You are very generous, sir, returned
“I, but I cannot acquit myself of the
“highest blame;—and I own, I am but
“ill capable of supporting the humiliating
“reflection, that you must have a strange
“idea of that woman’s delicacy, who
“could sacrifice her person to gratify her
“resentment.

My heart, madam, (however essential
“to my peace,) can never be compelled
“to retain a disadvantageous impression
“of you; it ever presents you to my
“imagination the same lovely amiable
“creature it was wont to consider you;
“and your loss will prove an inexhaustible

“source

“ source of anguish.—Witness the change
 “ you behold in my whole appearance.—
 “ I am shattered to death ;—I abandon my
 “ country.—Are these tokens of disesteem?
 “ Oh Miss Pittborough! (for I never
 “ will allow you any other name) — Yet
 “ I know not what I would ask—but do
 “ not despise my memory—and should
 “ you hear that I have happily fallen as
 “ becomes my rank, and character, do
 “ not deny me one valuable tear, as it
 “ is the only one I could wish your eyes
 “ to be acquainted with—”

Here the good woman made her appearance, and perhaps very seasonably, as the subject began to be abundantly too tender for my circumstances. She spread a clean, but coarse cloth over a table, on which she instantly conveyed some refreshment; but as I never tasted it, I will not deceive you as to its merit.

The

The surgeon having dressed his patient, waited upon me with an agreeable account of him. "No danger upon his honour—only an ugly contusion:" and again intreated to breathe a vein for me.

I endeavoured to excuse myself; but the worthy old hospitable creature urged so many arguments, and the colonel so many intreaties, that I at last complied.

The surgeon, who happened to be a forward inquisitive fellow, having long observed the colonel's anxiety and confusion, was for prescribing for him likewise; intimating, at the same time, "that the gentleman must be uncommonly interested, to occasion such uncommon agitation." The colonel, provoked at his boldness, sternly rebuked him. I was sorry he was so hasty, as the fellow soon after withdrew with visible marks of displeasure and resentment in his countenance.

The

The chaise was now in a condition to convey me home, and my servant had provided a proper driver (delays therefore would have been preposterous). — I intended to have played the heroine, but the colonel's behaviour shook all my resolves.

“ I will not, madam, said he, for your
 “ fake attempt conducting you to your
 “ carriage.—I feel I should but ill acquit
 “ myself ;—but before I lose sight of you
 “ for ever, permit me to assure you, that
 “ my heart will retain the most tender
 “ affection for you—so long as its pul-
 “ sation remains :—that in every climate,
 “ in every situation, your happiness will
 “ be dearer to me than all my other united
 “ concerns :—and that if ever I do pre-
 “ vail upon myself to revisit my native
 “ country, the desire of learning some
 “ happy tidings of your welfare will be
 “ my only motive.—Oh madam ! there
 “ was a time when, on so tedious a fe-
 “ paration as this promises to prove, you
 “ would have honoured me with some
 “ mark.

“ mark of your esteem :—but I do not
 “ now ask it.—May you be as blessed
 “ as affluence and a smiling world
 “ can make you !—and whatever is my
 “ fate——”

I only curstied, and retired :—had I
 spoke, I had betrayed myself to the whole
 novel :—but getting hastily into the chaise,
 I gave a vent to my tears ;—nor suspected
 I had reached home, until the carriage
 stopped to give me that information.

I endeavoured to twinkle the mist from
 my eyes :—but in vain ;—they were per-
 fectly swelled up :—I therefore complain-
 ed of weakness, faintness, and was hor-
 ribly insincere, to conceal my real dis-
 order.

I went to bed, but sleep you may guess,
 did not pay me a very early visit ;—nay
 I am hardly sensible if I slept at all :—
 however, finding my sight improved, I
 got

got up again at seven o'clock in high spirits, drank my tea, and took up my pen.—You, I doubt not, will impute the satisfaction I enjoy to its proper source.—I am still beloved—notwithstanding I am dead to him:—he will love only for me—he will never raise another to that happiness I have so wantonly forfeited—Forgive me this one weakness: do not condemn me for exulting, that I have one consolation left, and continue to be my tender and compassionate friend.

LET-



LETTER V.

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

ARE you, Ned, of the opinion, that time is an infallible remedy for every mental disease? or can you persuade yourself that some cases are too desperate ever to admit of alleviation? It is true, I am become less outrageous, than on my first experiencing my most afflicting disappointment, but the weight of it is not one jot more tolerable.

Company distracts me—and retirement is the haunt of black despair—the bottle proves an unavailing resource, my brain bids defiance to intoxication—amongst my own sex I find only insensibility and brutality—and I will not mention the sensations

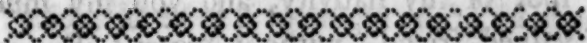
tions a female figure occasions me.—The dangers of the sea, the difficulties of a siege, may perhaps prove more salutary; for, notwithstanding I have but little of that wretch's character about me, who boasts "that horrors are not displeasing to him, and that the rocking battle-ments and raging tempest suit the gloomy habit of his soul;" yet I have reason to believe, that the most dreadful objects and most daring encounters will afford me the greatest consolation.

I have for some time been indefatigable in procuring an appointment, that, I flatter myself, will answer my every purpose; and if the gentleman can be prevailed upon to exchange with me, it will not be many days before I shall embark for — to reinforce the besiegers; the passage is but short, but the scenes are expected to be busy ones: you shall hear from me again so soon as we have settled the matter. How little did I imagine that I

should ever quit England, the beloved spot of my nativity, and you my much valued friend, without regret? But my feelings are all absorb'd by the recent calamity that has visited me; as lesser evils are ever swallowed up by greater.

Had you but seen the object of my tenderest affection, seen her before the rough hand of disappointment had reach'd her cheek, I should have been absolved in your consideration, however frantic or rash my conduct:—but I shall ramble, ramble wide from every rational point, if I once touch that key. Oh I am misery-struck!—irreparably undone! and those years that in the course of nature may be mine, can only lengthen out, not abate my affliction. Slovenly in my person, and bewildered in my senses—no trace or likeness of your once gay friend remains.

L E T.



LETTER VI.

From the same.

According to my promise, I once more write to you before my embarkation, nor will I take upon me to say it shall be the last time.—We know not when to bid adieu to those we love;—but you are sensible, Ned, that the distance that will soon lie between us, will prove an impediment to the same frequent intercourse—as the winds and seas are not at all times propitious.

I arrived at Portsmouth only late last night, and as the companies are exercised every morning early at some little distance from the town, preparatory to our grand

review on Monday next (when the remainder of the regiment is to be assembled) I did not see any of the officers until I join'd them in the field.

As we were returning to our quarters in tolerable order, a most unexpected accident gave new vigour to all those tender sensations I was so industriously endeavouring to stifle.

A chaise with only a lady in it turned suddenly upon us : the horses, young and high-mettled, began to plunge, the boy was thrown, and as I foresaw the consequences might not only be fatal to the lady, but many other persons, I commanded a halt, and, with the assistance of a brother-officer, before the creatures could disengage themselves from some entanglement of the shaft or harness, cut the braces, and happily prevented all further mischief.

It

It was not till after the performance of this necessary business, that I perceived the lady to be no other than *my* Miss Pittborough.—I flew to her assistance, and have reason to believe there was more terror in my appearance, than the danger I was delivering her from ; for having once recollected me, she sunk down in the chaise in a most pitiable condition. Some of the men conveyed the servant to an adjacent cottage, in which place I determined to lodge his lovely mistress, until she might with safety be removed : but conscious of the scene her recovery would produce, and unwilling to have any spectators, both for her sake and my own, I ordered the march to be resumed, and every officer to his proper station, telling them that I myself would take care of the lady.

It was some time before she began to revive, notwithstanding the best assistance I could procure ; and when she did open

her eyes, and again beheld her supporting, though self-drooping friend, she immediately turned her dear face from me, in apparent embarrassment and confusion. I knew not how to act;—but to leave her, I felt was impossible.—Indeed I had lost every cruel remembrance, and all my heart was tenderness and love. But I did not long enjoy the happy delusion; a prudent reserve, on her part, conveyed the instant idea of my wretchedness.—The rack would have been heaven to what I then endured:—but I was so far master of my reason, as by a hasty retreat to spare her the misery of beholding my severest emotions.

A hardened kind of composure succeeded this grievous agony. “ I can now
 “ look upon her, thought I, in the light
 “ she deserves.—Has she not disposed of
 “ that hand to another, that in honour
 “ and justice belonged only to me?—has
 “ she not rendered me miserable beyond
 “ all

“all possibility of relief?—and shall her
 “presence occasion me such unsuitable
 “sensations, unmindful of so great, so
 “unspeakable an injury? No: I will
 “return and convince her that, notwith-
 “standing all her loveliness, her levity
 “and inconstancy has broke the charm,
 “and I no longer consider her as worthy
 “my tenderness or affection.”

I was hurrying into the cot in this sa-
 vage disposition of mind, when, no less
 suddenly than unexpectedly, the hero was
 again lost in the man.—“And dare I
 “complain, cry’d I, in an half articu-
 “late accent? I, who have brought de-
 “struction upon the most valuable of
 “her sex?—Was it not my own neglect
 “of her — my presumptuously assumed
 “and injudicious neglect—that impelled
 “her to take the desperate steps she has
 “done?—Was she not all amiable con-
 “descension, all modest encouragement,
 “before she suspected schemes were form-

“ing against her?—Was it for me to
 “attempt to restrain her inclination?—
 “Was not her approbation I then en-
 “joyed voluntary?—and ought I not to
 “have waited her own time for the in-
 “estimable present of her hand? She
 “has only punished the guilty in what
 “relates to me, and is herself an un-
 “happy innocent victim.—What ravage
 “has not discontent already made in her
 “fine face? Where is that bloom, those
 “beautiful smiles, that were wont to
 “adorn it? Blasted, for ever blasted by
 “a base contrivance; and the wretch not
 “only lives, but would meanly excul-
 “pate himself by casting reflections upon
 “her.”

Some little bustle in the cottage alarm-
 ing me for Miss Pittborough's safety, I
 instantly emerged from my hiding-place,
 but had the satisfaction to find her greatly
 recovered, and the cause of my apprehen-
 sions no other than the arrival of a surgeon.

A wild-

A wildness in my countenance, and visible confusion in my behaviour, soon engaged the mortifying attention of this self-sufficient fellow, who, as I afterwards discovered, concluded I was the lady's relation—a relationship, Ned, that I would have purchased—but no matter—he was to my great misfortune mistaken in his conjectures. Nothing could be more awkward and constrained than the whole scene.—I would have given millions for one five minutes private conversation, but there appeared no probable means of obtaining that happiness—when, beyond my best hopes, the good woman, by a piece of overstrained civility, procured me the wish'd-for interview, nor shall she go unrewarded.

My military garb so forcibly recommended me to her old honest heart, that Miss Pittborough seemed to have but a second place in her consideration—and the proposal of our withdrawing into another

ther little cabbin, was apparently as much intended for my emolument as her convenience:—"The gentleman truly must not go without his dinner."

Her motive, however, was too worthy not to be excused:—maternal tenderness, if a weakness, is of the most amiable kind. An only child abroad, in the army—uncertain whether living or dead—drew the tears from her venerable eyes, which I will make it my business, if possible, to wipe away.

In repairing to the proposed retirement, the surgeon had the honour of assisting the lady;—an honour that my regard for her reputation would not permit me to aspire to: the self-denial cost me dear, but repays me with interest in the consciousness of its propriety.

The moments that were granted me by the absence of the surgeon, and honest
parade

parade of the old woman, were, however, far from being employed in the manner I had promised myself.—Her pardon, her friendship were to have been solicited;—but the big request was incapable of finding utterance. She, rather more collected, broke the painful silence—expressed a kind sense of the little service I had done her, condescending at the same time to intimate some delicate apprehensions respecting the opinion I must entertain of her conduct.

How inadequate my expressions to my feelings! I would have knelt and revealed my whole soul to her, had not the place been an insuperable objection.—Distance and coolness was all I had to depend upon;—and in spite of every tender suggestion, I strictly adhered to them. No resentment remains in her breast—self-accused—I intirely acquit her—and at length was a second time deprived of all I hold valuable.

But,

But, Ned, I did presume to tell her that I could never cease to love:—nor was she offended;—and I find myself greatly relieved by that (however unavailing) confession. The opportunity so unexpected—the reception so favourable—may it not prove a happy presage of future felicity?—The gout is not quite so quick in dispatching those it attacks, as a cannon ball, but is often as sure.—Mean and unworthy sentiments!—but, alas! they are the sentiments of my heart.

The good woman, on returning from her departed guest, was alarmed at the paleness and horror of my countenance.
 “Your honour is ill, cry’d she; what
 “can I do for you?”

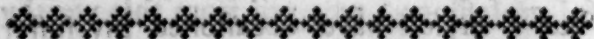
“You must not be uneasy, returned I;
 “I shall be better presently.—I will spend
 “the afternoon with you, if you can but
 “procure me a dish of tea;—and we
 “will

“ will have some conversation relative to
 “ your absent son ; perhaps, I may be able
 “ hereafter to give you a satisfactory ac-
 “ count of him.”

I will not trouble you with the grateful professions I received from this worthy creature :—the human heart in its natural state—where vice has not struck root—is truly amiable.—I derived more real pleasure from the rude civility and genuine gratitude of this cottager, than I ever experienced in any tête-à-tête, except with yourself, and one certain person, who must ever be excepted.

I took down her son's name in my pocket-book, and have agreed to correspond with this humble friend.—She is to inform me, from time to time, of the good or ill-fortune of her fair neighbour ;—and I am to remit her news that as nearly concerns her. I am by no means the wretched thing I was ; perhaps, indeed,

deed, I am only feeding a distemper, that will, at the long run, feed upon me : —but I am for present ease, whatever the purchase.



LETTER VII.

Lady SANXSEY to Mrs. BATSON.

I My dear sister, am at present neither in extraordinary health or spirits. Your kindly intended letter † affected me greatly: you see things in a strange unnatural light, but I am not now capable of disputing with you. The colonel is embarked. — No more interviews need be apprehended;—and the last was so innocent, from being unsought for,

† This letter is not inserted.

that I shall ever remember it with pleasure, notwithstanding your express disapprobation.

Misfortunes are not now slow to visit me:—my life is almost insupportable;—but I myself have occasioned my sufferings:—I will therefore suffer without complaining.

Sir Matthew, unfortunately for us both, has again altered his behaviour.—A stern brow—unkind concise replies—short meals—and long absences—are all he gives me to boast of. What is the cause of his dissatisfaction I know not:—I had almost said I am utterly regardless of it;—but if he expects to win my affections by such rough measures, he will find himself greatly deceived.—I can and will forbear reproaching him; but if I detest and despise him, he may thank himself.

His

His haggard house-keeper officiously intrudes herself upon my privacy, curiosity and ill-nature in her eye; but as I know not guilt, I am not alarmed at this appearance of suspicion:—it may be her way, however extraordinary or displeasing.

I have not an enemy upon earth that I would not pity under such horrid circumstances:—but I am not rigidly discreet, therefore not rigidly severe.

How capable I was wont to find you, of tender sympathy; but you have enlarged your connexions, and have but little to bestow upon the undeserving.

My ink is exhausted; I must obtain a fresh supply before I can proceed.—Yet what would I say? My friend, my sister, is no more:—to whom then shall I fly for the balm of consolation?

My

● ● ● ● ● ● ●

My God! what insolence! my orders disregarded—my requests denied!—but it is well;—the mean caution suits the narrow soul that dictates it. And would he deprive me of the only happiness I am capable of enjoying?—Perhaps it may not be in his power—my dear, dear pen, no stratagem shall be unattempted—no means untried—to preserve thy use.

But what can have suggested this arrogant conduct?—With whom does the wretch (let it pass, Nancy) think I would correspond?—The colonel is at a distance,—and for all the rest of his sex,—I neither know them, or wish to have the least knowledge of them.

I am now but too sensible of the impropriety of relying upon that man's honour, for the future happiness of your life, who is well acquainted that another is the object of your regard.

Sir Matthew's vanity was gratified in the first instance by my hand:—my succeeding behaviour excited his malice and revenge.—Repent accepting him!—humiliation and mortification should be my portion;—nor will he, I fear, be appeased, but by my intire destruction. I can but be rebuked, therefore my sentiments shall not be suppressed.—Is this a being that I have chosen in preference to colonel Dingley,—who is not only master of every personal recommendation, but evidently possessed of humanity, generosity, and love?—How fondly did he doat upon me?—and when the hand of sickness robbed my countenance of every attraction for the rest of his sex,—how was his tenderness and affiduity augmented?—His was the voice of friendship, the most endearing friendship—soothing, harmonizing;—his looks replete with benignity—and his actions unspeakably engaging. How would he have hung over me in tender apprehension and anxiety at the cottage,—

had

had not his respect, his delicacy, restrained him?—My honour was his first, his principal care. Oh! I read all the valuable meaning of the reserve he imposed upon himself, and shall ever remember it with the highest gratitude and approbation.

How dismal the change! Sir Matthew did not return till very late:—he was informed generally of the accident,—and very politely blamed me for going out alone.

“ He would rather have given fifty
 “ pounds than his horses should have met—
 “ with such a fright,—or so worthy a
 “ servant received such injury:—hoped it
 “ would be a caution for the future;—and
 “ if I chose to ride out when he him-
 “ self could not accompany me, that I
 “ would permit the house-keeper to at-
 “ tend me, who would point out a very
 “ different, and much properer route.—
 “ What pleasure I could propose to my-

“ self in going so near the end of Portf-
 “ mouth town, he really was at a loss to
 “ conjecture; but there was no account-
 “ ing at all times for people’s humours
 “ and fancies.”

I made no reply to this very endearing
 harangue — “ ’Tis possible, thought I, that
 “ he has drank too freely, and by resent-
 “ ing incivility, I may expose myself to
 “ insult.—I am bitterly conscious he has
 “ some reason to be dissatisfied with me.”

The morning, at length, arrived.—He
 hastily left my apartment, and has conti-
 nued distant, sullen, and unkind ever
 since. But he shall meet with due con-
 tempt.—The woman who vouchsafes to
 seek the reason of unkindness, betrays a
 desire of removing it; a desire that he is
 too indifferent to me, and too ungenerous
 ever to excite.

He sets a very pretty husband-like ex-
 ample—excludes me from the knowledge
 of

of whatever passes in his breast—and is undoubtedly too reasonable to expect a contrary conduct from me.—Dis taste and displeasure will hereafter be the only feelings I shall be able to entertain for him.

LETTER VIII.

From the same.

OH! my sister, the shocking secret is at length revealed,—and I have the additional misfortune of suspected virtue to contend with! How little did I foresee the malicious, the base construction that has been put upon the poor worthy colonel's behaviour!—The whole accident, from first to last, is considered as the effect of premeditation;—and, notwithstanding I was perfectly ignorant of the road the fellow was taking—had from

my first setting out submitted myself entirely to his choice;—and from my situation was excluded from every possibility of learning that the colonel was at Portsmouth;—every circumstance of that day's fatal excursion has unhappily concurred to fix a stain upon my reputation, and I am neither heard nor believed.—This wicked baronet imputes even my request of being brought to this odious place to my expectation of being cast in the colonel's way,—calls me practised designer—artificial deceiver—and himself a wretched injured dupe.

And do I live to be thus accused, innocent as I am even in intention?—But that blessed innocence proves my great support.—Let him condemn—let him vilify me, agreeable to the rancour of his own corrupt heart.—Colonel Dingley knows it is unmerited, and his good opinion, and conscious integrity, is more than sufficient to make me smile at his black vagaries,

But

But the world—and what is this world? A bug-bear of the imagination!—I shall never more be permitted to enjoy it, unless my constitution out-lasts this monster of a husband!—And let it amuse itself with tearing my fame in pieces;—I shall still remain uncontaminated,—and rise the higher in that esteem, that is superior with me to every other consideration.

I am, however, permitted to write, on the pretty modest condition—that all my letters shall be conveyed to the post-house either by himself or one of his diabolical messengers.—With all my spirit!—and should he be tempted to view his own likeness from the pen of an injured wife,—let him add another meanness to those he has already practised, and break the seals. I am not sufficiently myself to draw him at present in his proper colours; but he may depend upon it, the lines shall be both strong and just, when I do take him in hand.

But I should inform you how clumsily he was pleased to discover his base suspicions to me.

I was—shall I tell you how I was at that instant employed, when the dinner-bell summoned me to appear before him? Pope's *Eloise*, I believe, by accident, lay open upon my toilet:—some lines of it are very striking, especially what then more immediately engaged my attention, as I was palpably convinced, that

“Of all afflictions taught a lover yet,

“*‘Twas much the hardest science to forget.*”

My inclination would have prompted me to indulge a thousand melancholy soft reflections,—but I nevertheless delayed not to attend my gloomy tyrant.

On entering the parlour, the first object that saluted my eyes was that very impertinent surgeon, of whom I gave you a short

a short description in my cottage-adventure.

The sight of him so unexpected—some recollections—I however blushed, and was unable to conceal my surprize, or, if you please, in the baronet's own sweet words, guilty confusion!

“I hope, madam,” said the groveling, half-advancing reptile, “I see you pretty well recovered from your late accident.—I really had much apprehension of some bad consequence.—Your fright”—He hemmed—paused—and cast a look of meaning upon the doughty Sir Matthew.

“Yes, madam,” said the knight, “it seems you was most extraordinarily affected for so common an occasion, as well as the gentleman who did me the honour to show you great civility.—I understood, indeed, that he was arrived

“in

“ in this part of the country,—but I little
 “ expected to hear that my wife had had
 “ an interview with him, or was capa-
 “ ble of enjoying a couple of hours pri-
 “ vate conversation with a man who so
 “ recently attempted to murder her hus-
 “ band.—But perhaps it was not possible
 “ to refuse so trifling an indulgence (how-
 “ ever inconsistent with honour or pru-
 “ dence) as I understand the gentleman’s
 “ tenderness and assiduity was such, as
 “ naturally enough led my friend, here,
 “ into the opinion, that you was his pro-
 “ perty, not mine.—But I am surprised
 “ so well-bred a spark should commit
 “ such a breach of good manners, as to
 “ return only abuse for the civil concern
 “ expressed for his health.—It was no
 “ less foreign to his general character,
 “ than impolitic at that juncture,—as it
 “ could not fail to convey a prejudice,
 “ where it would have been his interest
 “ to have recommended himself.”

Astonish-

Astonishment — contempt — mortification and anguish for some moments sealed my lips; — and recollection occurring, previous to the power of utterance, I disdained making a defence at so despicable a tribunal, — but, bursting into tears of indignation, relieved my own breast, and, I believe, both disappointed and stung the other wretches.

The baronet stared — stamped — and was perfectly frantic with rage and resentment.

Mr. Surgeon in vain endeavoured to account for a silence so far different to what he expected the affair would have produced. — Fits, revilings, and every species of low fury, he had prepared himself to encounter upon the occasion, from a good woman's having fallen to his lot, who was by no means sparing in either violence or ill language, on the slightest provocation.

“ What,

“What, madam,” exclaimed——(you will find him out by proper marks) “am I not worthy an answer?—and do you add neglect to the other injuries I have sustained?—A pretty return, indeed, for my temper and forbearance this whole week past.—I was convinced you had your private motives for chusing a retreat so ill adapted to your natural inclination; and, when I found the enemy was so near, judged it necessary to be upon my guard:—however, as I was far from suspecting that you had been before-hand with all my precautions, I observed the utmost moderation,—and should have removed every restraint on the removal of the cause;—but, notwithstanding the hurt one of my servants had received, and the absence of the other, prevented them from making observations on your conduct, yet you see the knowledge of it was not to escape me; and, in spite
“of

“ of the gentleman’s prudence, in playing least in fight, and amusing one person, and employing another, to prolong his satisfaction ;—there was sufficient evidence both of his and your unworthiness.”

“ Be assured, sir,” said I, with a firm but dispassionate accent, “ it is not the matter you charge me with, but the manner that I condemn. Had you required an explanation of every particular of my conduct that day, I should have considered you as entitled to receive it.—I wanted not to be confronted by such a—gentleman.—I had nothing to disguise, nothing to conceal,—and whatever I may now suffer in your opinion, from misrepresentation, I am convinced will be entirely obviated, by enquiring of your servants how the accident was produced.—Let me intreat you, sir, to examine them ;—their integrity, their consequence, their testimony

“ many

" many cannot be inferior to what has
 " already had weight with you;—and I
 " am willing to abide by your justice
 " and judgment, when you have thus
 " cleared up every shadow of design or
 " impropriety."

" You must excuse me, madam," re-
 turned the sneering baronet;—"but I
 " have not been so backward in obtaining
 " every possible light into this affair, [as]
 " you may imagine.—I have not only
 " received the fellow's confession of their
 " ignorance, from your good manage-
 " ment,—but likewise the honest report
 " of the poor deluded cottager, who, I
 " believe, will be some time before she
 " recovers her surprize at your confidence
 " and artifice.—Little did she think so
 " young, so modest a looking lady could
 " have been capable of such impro-
 " per behaviour.—Have you any thing
 " further to propose?"

" I ac-

“ I acknowledge, sir,” said I, “ that
 “ your whole conduct upon the occasion
 “ is admirable. — Far be it, therefore,
 “ from me, to except against what is so
 “ evidently unexceptionable. — I have one
 “ satisfaction, however, beyond the reach
 “ of the most malicious industry, or most
 “ injurious attacks, — a consciousness of
 “ my own — but I will not mention it — you
 “ cannot, dare not suspect it — and as I
 “ shall never be so abandoned, as even to
 “ disregard appearances, — my future be-
 “ haviour shall be as blameless as my past
 “ intentions ; — and I will compel you to
 “ be ashamed of your present suspicions.
 “ I hope you will not insist upon my sit-
 “ ting down with such a wicked (not to
 “ mention how despicable a) being, who
 “ has not only attempted to stab an hi-
 “ therto unblemished reputation, but to
 “ sow dissension between parties whose
 “ happiness ought to be held sacred !” —
 So saying, I was for retiring with pre-
 cipitation ; — but my lord and master was

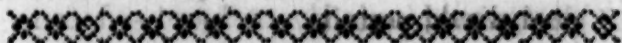
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by no means in the complying mood :— he therefore, by his authority, or rather my condescension, placed me on my usual seat, and I did the honours of his table with the utmost grace a proud offended heart would permit.

But, notwithstanding my passiveness with respect to the above-mentioned article, I was neither disposed nor consenting to participate the repast,—but remained silent, reserved, and unsociable ;—the latter of which my unsoiled plate was a most incontestible proof.—I at length obtained a happy release,—and have thus presented you with a faithful account of every particular. How it will terminate I know not ; but as inflaming his groundless jealousy would but prove a confirmation with the world of the justice of it, I am determined to support every consequence in such a manner as I flatter myself will best conduce in the end to my justification.

Adieu,

Adieu, my dear sister;—cruel or kind,
I find my affection for you incapable of
diminution.



LETTER IX.

MISS HUTCHENS to MISS BINFIELD.

A Letter from Sir Matthew Sanxley
to mamma!—what can it contain?
—I die with curiosity.—She cannot surely
be dead—she has never run away.—I must
endeavour to learn the particulars.

My mother has been pleased to relax
somewhat of her reserve,—and, on my
entering her dressing-room, put the letter
she had just received into my hands.—

“Read it,” said she, “Kitty,—read the
“mortifying contents!—I am, indeed,

“ sorry you should purchase your know-
“ ledge of an ill-natured world at so dear
“ a price, as on the present occasion.
“ That poor thing is most vilely, and, I
“ do believe, unjustly traduced.—I can-
“ not trace the least probability of design
“ in the whole affair,—and must consider
“ it as merely the effect of one of those
“ unlucky chances that sometimes befall
“ the most prudent and considerate of us
“ all. Yet, my child, it may teach you
“ this one important truth, that indis-
“ cretion is as capable of giving an irre-
“ parable stab to the fairest reputation as
“ actual crimes;—as in the latter case
“ the very worst is public in the first in-
“ stance, the former seems to imply more
“ than our sight or penetration can reach.”

A pretty kettle of fish has she made of it truly!—Nothing would serve her ladyship, but retiring in the dumps to Sir Matthew's old mansion near Portsmouth;—a most convenient situation for what
soon

soon ensued. The knight had an engagement—left her a few hours to her own inventions:—she began immediately to exercise her authority as mistress.—The chaise by her orders is drawn out,—and away she drives with pleasure enough I'll answer for her.

The fellow had his cue.—Deep-laid artifice!—You or I could by no means have acquitted ourselves so cleverly upon such an occasion. He takes a route that brings them pop upon the colonel, who was either returning from a review, or some preparatory parade;—and, the more effectually to conceal madam's forwardness and indiscretion, at the hazard of his own neck, overturns the carriage,—and well was he paid for it without doubt!

A cottage (you may judge how accidentally) was at hand.—The lady is conveyed to it by her gallant lover;—one servant is dispatched for a surgeon—the

other incapable of attending to any one but himself,—consequently the whole care of his mistress fell to the colonel's share.

The poor ignorant woman gives a strange account of that part of the scene she was permitted to be witness of.—Such loving, such sighing, such whining, and such dying, as surfeits one but to think of. The servant, at length, returns with the surgeon,—who was led into an error by (at least) the colonel's fond behaviour, that I suppose occasioned my delicate cousin some very delicate sensations. As sure as you are alive, he concluded they were man and wife.

It seems the gentleman snapped him up very short, on his communicating the opinion he had conceived;—which, by the way, was very impolitic, as it only opened his mouth against them both. Madam was brought home in a fine condition;—but as Sir Matthew forbore being

in-

MISS PITTBOROUGH. 69

inquisitive, and the servants told no tales, she hugged herself with the hope that all would blow over.

The baronet, by his lady's perverse stars, was engaged that very day fortnight in a hunting match ;—and who should belong to the sag end of the company, but the very surgeon already mentioned ?

The whole party dined together,—and the fellow happening to be naturally voluble and communicative, and not personally acquainted with the baronet, gave them the cottage adventure, as an addition to their entertainment.

The ears of all present (except those of the dull doating husband) were suitably tickled ;—but that unfortunate gentleman (who does not possess the brightest understanding) unable to support the mirth of the company, though by no means pointed, as the surgeon had prudently

named no names,—was so mean and ridiculous as to beshrew his own nest.

The company immediately screwed their features into a less risible form,—affected to condole their neighbour's misfortune;—who, casting about for revenge, and a proper unravelling of every horrid circumstance, gave Mr. Surgeon an invitation to dine with him the next day. In short, my lady, to her unspeakable confusion, was confronted;—and Sir Knight sufficiently convinced of his dishonour.

So far for information.—He then “intreats my mother to do him the justice to believe him incapable of taking a brutal or rash revenge;—but hopes neither she, nor any other of his wife's relations, will condemn him for shewing some resentment, where the provocation is so flagrant:—that he found the colonel was embarked; but nevertheless he had retrenched her ladyship's liberty, and could not say when
he

he should prevail upon himself to enlarge it:—that she had deceived him in a very gross degree; for, notwithstanding he was sensible she had some liking for Dingley, he had ever considered her as a woman of the nicest honour, and the last person who would have brought either herself or him into dis-reputation.

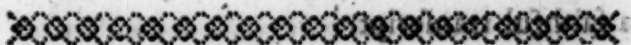
He then concludes with wishing he could prevail upon mamma to visit Hampshire, in order to satisfy herself that he has not exaggerated matters; and, if possible, trace out some favourable circumstance to deliver his mind from the horror with which it is oppressed.—He cannot bear to be stigmatised, as is usual in such cases:—and he is convinced no person but herself can obviate that misfortune.”

My mother insisted upon my returning the curious epistle (which I did without one comment the instant I had perused

it) or I would have presented you with a faithful transcript.

Something may perhaps be struck out of this incident.—Suppose I should be able to prevail upon her to let me be her proxy,—and by that means facilitate your journey;—for, though you are many miles distant from Sir Matthew's, it shall go hard with me but I will make you a visit. What a happy adventure, if productive of such happy consequences! Adieu.

L E T -



LETTER X.

Miss HUTCHENS to Mrs. BATSON.

MADAM,

NOTWITHSTANDING your very gentle request to mamma, never more to permit her own child to act the secretary's part, I am again commissioned to be the conveyancer of disagreeable tidings.

My cousin has unhappily rendered herself the whole country and town's talk,—is a prisoner in her own house,—and, as her indiscretions have been most glaring, it is very uncertain when she may obtain her enlargement.

For my part, I cannot conceive what end she could propose to herself in granting

ing the colonel an interview in an obscure cottage. Could she suppose the bosom of ignorance was a proper repository for so important a secret?—But your very wise ones are ever the most liable to fall into error. It seems the colonel was so very unguarded in his behaviour, as to give the alarm.—The old cottager called in a neighbour,—who being so situated as to over-hear their whole conversation, made such a report, as I would much rather you should conceive, than I describe.

It was at all times evident, that your sister was by no means indifferent respecting her colonel,—though she delighted in displaying her power, and rendering him ridiculous;—nor was it necessary to inform any beholder how deeply he was caught. I only mention this circumstance as a stronger proof of the impropriety of their meeting privately.—I own it is both a mortifying, as well as a very scandalous affair. I am attacked wherever I appear;
and,

and, notwithstanding all my efforts, am capable of making but an indifferent defence.

Suppose my uncle was to exert himself upon the occasion?—Perhaps he might be able to effect a tolerable accommodation;—otherwise God knows what may be the consequence. — Her reputation, however, in all events, is utterly demolished;—and though I may be so unhappy as to incur your displeasure a second time, in return for my concern for a thoughtless relation, I must presume to repeat my wish, that she had still remained safe in your harmless village.—A disposition that is naturally mischievous, cannot be better restrained than by pure air and narrow precincts.

Mamma joins in proper condolance for this family-misfortune, with, &c. &c.

LET-

LETTER XL

Mrs. BATSON to Miss HUTCHENS.

MADAM,

I SHOULD think myself inexcusable, if I was to treat this second friendly epistle of yours as I did a former one, as it really demands something more than silent contempt.

Notwithstanding I have reason to lament the opportunity my poor sister's conduct has furnished you with, of shining at her expence, I own you have reason to rejoice at it, as neither I, nor any other person either of your family or acquaintance, could otherwise have discovered the value of your heart.

O Kitty, youth and prosperity most intolerably mislead you!—But beware of misfor-

misfortunes :—you are by no means the more secure from having hitherto escaped ; —and bitter remorse alone would be your portion in a fallen state, from your having been incapable of fixing one friend, even in the day of your fairest reputation.

As to the worthy though unhappy object of your former envy and present affected contempt, I must tell you, that she had sufficient charity to cover (if possible) even crimes ; — consequently the few indiscretions she has committed, carry an amiable palliation along with them :—and I do protest to you, that, aspersed and vilified as she is at this period, she has a thousand times more merit in my eyes than the little, malicious, pert, unfeeling mortal, that would hunt her down, only for her superior excellence.

Come, Miss Kitty, I intreat you would come and visit our little village.—Her praises, the praises of every one that has known

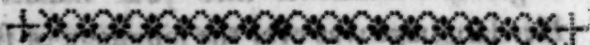
known distress, would soon grate your unwilling ears. She never exulted in any one's misfortunes; — she never handed about a cruel scandalous tale, whatever its foundation, — but industriously checked its progress, whenever propagated: — she was a general restorer and preserver of peace; — the aged and afflicted found easy access to her; — and she rejoiced in a far greater degree, when she could warm the heart of the one with joy, and the other with consolation, than such a disposition as yours is capable of doing, even upon so agreeable an occasion, as levelling perfection.

I have enclosed some letters to my aunt, that will set this matter in a very different light to what it at present appears. — She will not fail to do the injured justice, — and perhaps you may very soon be enabled to enter public assemblies without your delicate and friendly apprehensions of mortifying attacks. Truth will and must

prevail, however crushed for a time;—and I only hope, for the reputation of the family, that your future conduct may never bring a greater stain upon your honour, or wound your mother's peace more insupportably, than the late steps of my valuable sister has done.

No human being ever could attain perfection, or I should flatter myself with living to see the only blemish in lady Sanxsey's nature totally eradicated. As I write to my aunt, I have no commissions to charge you with;—therefore only beg your acceptance of all due thanks for the favour you have conferred upon, &c. &c.

LET-



LETTER XII.

Mrs. BATSON to Mrs. HUTCHENS.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I AM sensible how great a shock it must be to your humane heart, to have the reputation of a poor unthinking (tho' by no means criminal) creature tossed about so mercilessly as my sister's is at present. But I will not complain of the world;—what quarter can be expected from strangers, when our own family begin the cry against us?

However blameable lady Sanxsey's conduct, with respect to the disposition of her person, the accident that has wounded her fame is as groundless as malicious. I cannot give you a better idea of the world's injustice, than by putting her undisguised

disguised sentiments into your hands.— Her language was ever the language of sincerity, and, however she may have descended to err, she scorns to deceive.

As to the wretch who is now most unhappily master of her fate, she is abundantly his superior, even in her present disgraceful circumstances;—for, at least, her manner of supporting his ill treatment of her has a merit in it, that his ungenerous soul must never pretend to. I have hitherto dealt out reprehension and instruction with a liberal hand;—but I must acknowledge, notwithstanding the advantage a mere stander-by has, upon every occasion, over the parties engaged, (from being free from passion, and devoid of prejudice,) that she could not have acted more properly by the best advice I am capable of giving, — than she has now done from the dictates of her own prudence and understanding.—Yes, my aunt, I am proud to think with how much dignity and pro-

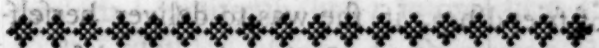
priety she has conducted herself towards her candid judge, and most conscientious accuser.

I would be the last person to encourage or justify rebellion in a wife ;—but, considering the natural pride of my sister's heart (the bad effects of too great indulgence) and the wrong, provoking, and illiberal measures Sir Matthew has taken with her, I could not deny her the asylum of friendship, if she was to deliver herself from all undue restraint, by an absolute elopement.

It is well her enemies had the prudence to lie close until the colonel was safely embarked :—I am mistaken if he would not otherwise have most severely chastised them ;—not that it would have contributed in the least to heal her wounded fame, —but human nature could not have borne such villany unmoved.

The

The testimony of the servants, the poor old woman's deposition, would have more weight with the sensible and well-disposed, than any other evidence;—and I shall never rest, until a proper person is employed to examine them. I need not apologize to you for giving you this trouble, as I am sensible your heart is such, that you find your reward in the execution of every worthy and benevolent action.



LETTER XIII.

Goody JACKSON to Colonel DINGLEY.

GOOD YOUR HONOUR,

AS the old proverb says, “When we want to beat a dog, we are never at a loss for a stick.”—That sweet gentlewoman that you brought to our hut in so piteous a condition, has been very

roughly handled since you left these parts, and for no varfal thing, but your honour's kindness to her.

Here have I and my poor gaffer been raised out of our beds, both early and late, to tell gentlefolks and gentlefolks the same story.

"Why," says I, "so far from any harm being done, there was not the least sign of a bad intention:—the gentleman, God love him, is but ill rewarded for his goodness.—To be sure, I thought he would have died upon the spot with grief;—and when he went under the sheet, though I durst not speak, I see'd all through a hole in the thatch, and verily thought he was distracted mad.—Ah, that he loves the lady, is as certain sure, as that I stand here alive;—but with no more ill than the love of a baby.—It pitied me sorely to see the sad condition she was in;—and

"then

MISS PITTBOROUGH. 85

“ then the speeches he made,—and,
“ again, her answers, would have pierced
“ a heart of stone :—I am sure not even
“ patient Griffel, or the Children in the
“ Wood, was ever half so moving.”

But, howsomdever, all would not do ;
—I can’t speak your gentlefolks lingo,—
and so they put ill *structions* on what I
said, and turned it all their own way.
Indeed, I know my own : know—if some
folks (good for nothing as they are) had
not been false-hearted and bribed, as a
body may say, this could never have hap-
pened.—Well, pride and malice seldom
thrive.—I myself see him o’er-paid for his
trouble,—and he need not sure have
blabbed. But God’s will must be done !—
The Lord send the poor lady may not be
brought to her grave amongst them. I
hope your honour will not blame us, nor
be less kind to poor Matt, if you should
light of him ;—for we would serve you
by night or by day, and have reason to

bleſs the hour that brought you to our hut.

I walked o'er to your landlord at Portſmouth, as you directed, and got him to write this, as, Lord help me, I can neither write nor read, or I would tell you what he ſays of you ;—but he will put nothing in that he does not like,—and I had a deal of *treaty* to get him to give my own ſtile ;—“ But,” ſaid I, “ his honour knows my heart ſo well, that if “ you will not write it as I ſpeak it, he “ won't be above half-pleaſed.”—So no more at preſent, than kind love to Matt, from your honour's &c. &c.

LET-
of our expedition from the public papers.
You muſt have learned the termination
I am not now able to ſay as it may.

LETTER XIV.

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

IT is true, Ned, that I have removed myself at a cruel distance from my beloved Miss Pittborough, but have by no means found the dissipation I sought for. However, I am at present roused from my melancholy depression, by an unexpected incident. My mind, in some degree, experiences its usual activity;—my invention is casting about for ways and means;—and my imagination has started (with some friendly assistance) an imperfect plan of a pursuit, that will afford me much business, if not amusement.

You must have learned the termination of our expedition from the public papers.—Be that as it may, I am not now dis-

posed to enter upon the subject;—I have more interesting employment for my pen.—Read, read the enclosed;—and if I do not fix upon some method of punishing every malicious accomplice in this last black affair,—conclude that my misfortunes have destroyed both my capacity and understanding!

Miss Kitty Hutchens, as the grand original, shall also be duly remembered.—The obligations she has conferred upon me, shall be repaid with interest.—I will secure her from every species of injury;—but her humiliation shall be severe, and as conspicuous as the sun! My plot is pretty well formed with respect to her, but not yet ripe for execution:—I will not, therefore, anticipate the pleasure a full communication will hereafter afford you, by premature hints.—As for Mr. Surgeon, and his co-operator, Sir Knight of the post, they may depend on my best services.

Do you not admire the honest simplici-
ties of the poor creature's stile?— (for I am
sensible every expression is her own) her
amanuensis is a worthy hearted fellow, and
would neither add nor diminish, except
where he himself was concerned.

Little did I imagine, when I gave her
the injunction to inform me of every
change or incident, and engaged his pro-
mise of assisting her good intention with
his skill in a science it is her misfortune
to be unacquainted with ;—that she would
so soon have had so just and so extraordi-
nary an occasion for complying with it.

I do assure you, I have gained a treasure
in her son Matt, whom I have placed about
myself.—His disposition is so valuable, and
his understanding so strong, that (but for
the cloud of illiterateness) I would have
made a better provision for him ;—but is
not contentment superior to worldly ho-
nour or affluence?

I shall

I shall return to England in a few weeks at farthest ; — but observe — incog. — as a report will prevail, and you must give a sanction to it, by affecting to believe it, that I am making a second tour to those places you and I visited with so much delight some seven or eight years ago, to finish our education, as the phrase is. I do not mean to trust myself with even one sight of the person on earth I most wish to see, whatever opportunities my disguise may furnish me with, as the feast would be dearly bought, and only revive fatal remembrances.

“ My dear Miss Kitty Hutchens, how far was I from conceiving that your idea could ever give me delight ! — But I now profess myself your very humble servant ; — nor will I renounce the intire devotion of my person and abilities to prove myself such, until I have brought you to acknowledge the justice of my proceedings.

“ For

“ For your sake, and the sake of a few
 “ other persons almost equally beloved, I
 “ forego all my former resolutions;—for
 “ your sake I feel the utmost impatience to
 “ return to a country I so lately quitted
 “ with anguish and disgust;—for your sake
 “ I will exert the choicest endowments of
 “ my head and heart; nor will I spare a
 “ considerable expence to convince you of
 “ my best friendship.

“ How could I be so long blind to your
 “ numberless perfections? Are not your
 “ eyes brighter than the day, your lips the
 “ purest coral, your voice the perfection
 “ of harmony, and your breast the resi-
 “ dence of the Graces? No rash design,
 “ no envious sensation, no breach of ve-
 “ racity, no malicious pleasure ever agi-
 “ tated your gentle heart.

“ Ah, why was it necessary for me to
 “ wander far, far distant from your habi-
 “ tation to discover your inestimable worth?

“ —But

“ —But do not punish me for an involun-
 “ tary transgression — Blindness is a mis-
 “ fortune, not a fault. — I no sooner see
 “ my error, than it is lamented by me. —
 “ Pity therefore, most kindly pity the con-
 “ dition you have reduced me to ; — receive
 “ me into favour, and prove propitious to
 “ my wishes.”

Prithee, Ned, don't conclude that this a-
 postrophe to Miss Hutchens is the ebulli-
 tion of a frantic brain : — no, my understand-
 ing has seldom been clearer than at present. —
 But you need not puzzle your rather stupid
 imagination for a solution of the mystery,
 for I tell you as a friend, that you would
 find yourself as wide from the point in the
 conclusion as beginning of your conjec-
 tures ; — and rest assured that in due time I
 will present you with a key.

Is this the language of an undone wretch ?
 — a wretch that cannot boast even the most
 distant ray of hope for his support ? — who
 has

has so recently been deprived of the greatest blessing nature could bestow, and not only finds it torn from his own hands, but committed to the possession of—It will not do:—how soon I am out of my depth, when I once venture into this troubled water?

But let me tell you, notwithstanding I cannot conquer my weakness, I have learnt to restrain it.—A neglected person, an inconsistent behaviour, no longer tell officious tales, and proclaim me unfortunate;—but I am become spruce, collected, chatty, and composed.—I can ask a question with tolerable pertinence, and give orders without exciting the stare of amazement.—I can spend a comfortable hour with honest Matt Jackson, who, though my servant, is encouraged to relate his humble adventures with the prolixity he loves.

He indeed is now and then so bewildered in his relation, he knows not how to disentangle himself, a perverse Susan having led him

him, a most disgraceful dance; but a smile from his master accompanied with an "Oh Matt, never be ashamed of what emperors and kings have practised ages ago. — The little god delights in sportive tricks—and the more sincere the heart, the more ridiculous the behaviour; —" cuts the thread, and he again runs on a vast length without any interruption. I know you will rejoice at every expedient that contributes to lull the sorrows of your friend into a pleasing forgetfulness, though for ever so short a period.

Philosophers and princes have had their rattles, nor are Matt Jackson's amours less innocent or less entertaining than the best of them.

LET-

LETTER XV.

Colonel DINGLEY to GOODY JACKSON.

MY WORTHY OLD FRIEND,

I Sincerely thank you for your kind letter, and rejoice that I have the power to make you some amends in the person of your son.

The place had surrendered before our arrival, consequently there was no other work left for us to do, but to establish a garrison. I soon found your son out amongst the recovered prisoners: he had languished some months with a wound in his shoulder. I put him under our surgeon's care, and he is even now so well, as to be able to walk abroad. He would have wrote to you himself,

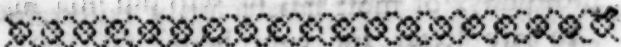
self, but for reasons you need not be informed of: however, he will put his mark to my letter for your better satisfaction. But though stoutly recovered, I believe he is disqualified for his majesty's future service, I will therefore take him into mine; and if kind treatment can compensate for the less honourable appointment, he shall be no loser.

I am much concerned at the trouble you mention has been given you; but I hope soon to be in England with your son in my hand, when we will forget all former disappointments, and give one hour to the honest raptures that will warm your valuable hearts.

I am, &c. &c.

P. S. My thanks and good wishes attend my old friend and landlord.

L E T.



LETTER XVI.

Lady SANXSEY to Mrs. BATSON.

STILL, my dear sister, things continue in the same mortifying state ; all accommodation I fear is impracticable. *He* cannot forget, and *I* am incapable of forgiving ; therefore the breach must ever remain.

We dined together yesterday, when he vouchsafed to tell me, in a mumbling unfriendly accent, that he expected a visitor. I received the information with modest silence, — which was construed into neglect, contempt, and a horrid offence. We had a pretty warm altercation on the subject, when he flounced out of the room, and I retired to my own apartment, to this my

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darling employment :——which was most profitably, or most satisfactorily entertained, I will not presume to determine.

I am greatly puzzled to guess who it is he can expect ; but I dare believe it is some bottle companion, that, however he may contribute to cheer his hours, will only render mine more miserable.

Oh my sister, how does the expression of one of your letters written in my day of folly, occur to me, whenever I view my faded form : “ It was conscious integrity alone that could enlighten my countenance.” I have deprived myself of that, and every charm is fled, agreeable to your fatal prediction.

I have lately read over the matrimonial service, and am astonished I was not froze with horror at that tremendous charge ; “ As you shall answer it at the dreadful day of judgment, &c.” But though I acknowledge

knowledge it is far from being any extenuation of my guilt, I really was so agitated by resentment and mortified pride, that I was incapable of attending to one syllable. A pretty condition of mind, indeed, for entering into so solemn an engagement! and the event is as happy as such a beginning promised.

I have been a wife now turned of two months, and have never been permitted, since the fatal accident of the chaise, to have one will or inclination of my own gratified. — I have not a retiring place; my closet is no longer an asylum; I am as liable to be broke in upon there, as in the most public apartment.

If I attempt to perform any act of devotion, I am sure to be interrupted; and I am so discomposed by the several passions that are roused by a sense of indignities, that I cannot return to it. But I have heard my dear father say, that the duties

of a christian do not consist in outward forms; for that, by conforming to the necessity of our conditions for conscience sake, and performing the good within our power, will be much more acceptable than the barely honouring or praising our Creator with our lips, when our hearts are far from him.

I am much beholden to you, for the affectionate concern you express for my health and reputation: you may depend upon it, it shall be my care, as far as I am able, to heal the one, and preserve the other. — But I hear a chaise: — this impulse of curiosity convinces me I am by no means dead to the world, though literally buried to all its enjoyments.

Well Nancy, Sir Matthew has indeed taken a most effectual method to recommend himself to my favour, by the companion

panion he has chose for me.—What! was the savage triumph incomplete, unless in participation with another? Was it not sufficient that he himself beheld the cruel effects of his severity in my emaciated body and depressed spirits, but he must summons my constant well-wisher Miss Kitty Hutchens to be a witness of it?—But I will even in this respect, as heretofore, defeat his malice by patient resignation.

She will, I doubt not, be all ill-natured pleasure from top to toe;—nor will she let one opportunity slip, of punishing my well-remembered despicable vanity and exultation at the ridotto. I, indeed, had some little excuse for my folly; for I had not then forfeited—the colonel was my own.—But her motive for punishing it, can have no other foundation than barbarous revenge. We were at least upon equal terms, and I could only make myself ridiculous and contemptible; but she will

now be guilty of the most ungenerous insult.

I am called to supper with what appetite I may.



LETTER XVII.

Miss HUTCHENS to Miss BINFIELD.

O My dear girl, I have most successfully carried every point my heart was set upon, and have now the pleasure of writing to you from Sir Matthew Sanx-sey's.

My mother had a multitude of reasons for declining the baronet's invitation, but closed with my proposal of becoming her representative, with all the willingness I could either wish or desire. I sent a few compliments and apologies to his knightship,

ship, and intreated him to accept of my company in such strains as (if I am not amazingly mistaken in his disposition) met with his highest approbation.

I wrote to her ladyship's miserable moping sister previous to my journey, but did not mention one syllable concerning it: I knew her too well to expose myself to the danger of an impediment. I really question, such is her dislike of my hard nature (as she politely calls it), and dotage of her sister, but that, rather than not have prevented my going, she would have torn herself from father, spouse, and beloved chimney-corner.

Well, but I am arrived. Nothing worth mentioning occurred in my journey. Sir Matthew gave me a most genteel reception. — We talked the matter over, — shook our wise heads with great judgment, — lamented our share in madam's disgrace, — and laid the ground-work for some future detractions.

My lady was pleased not to make her appearance until the supper was served in. She saluted me coldly, — and took her seat with well-dissembled dignity. — It is plain the colonel has told her the imposition I practised upon his credulity.

Sir Matthew, with all the indifference of a seven years marriage, (though you well know when he was noosed) disregarding his lady, paid me all the civility and court imaginable. My taste, my understanding, my good-nature, and politeness, were very prettily complimented by him; — and upon the whole, I don't think him in any degree so despicable as usual.

Upon my word, her ladyship is finely altered: her eyes are sunk into her head; — the much admired daub of her cheeks totally washed off; — her face the length of my arm; — and her voice humility itself. — O matrimony, matrimony, what miracles thou art capable of producing!

She

She retired somewhat sooner than the rules of good-breeding prescribe—but left me her baronet to coquet and entertain me.

To-morrow we are to traverse the antiquated garden;—repeat couplets from a variety of poets, who have been foolishly enamoured of rural scenes;—drink our coffee in a ruinous alcove; and conclude the evening at piquet.

In a day or two we shall take an airing to the cottage of cottages,—where the surgeon of surgeons will be appointed to meet us, and her proud ladyship is destined to be of the party.—Judge of my friendship, when in the midst of such busy scenes, I with pleasure devote a not inconsiderable share of my hours to your amusement.

Tuesday noon.

As I hate to do things by halves, I was unwilling to dispatch my letter without acquainting

quainting you with the success of our excursion to Goody Jackson's, as I think the old wretch is called. Behold me, then returned, and no great light obtained. The woman is partial, the surgeon reserved, and my lady as *mute as a mackarel*.

“She disdains, you must understand, at-
 “tempting to justify herself:—the world has
 “her consent to judge her as unfavourably
 “as it pleases.—Unmerited censure is but
 “a slight calamity,—when compared with
 “cruel insult” (including my behaviour I
 suppose in the latter.)

I am glad, however, that we have picked up a companion that is tolerably lively and intelligent.—We took his surgeonship home with us, and, in short, contrived to spend a very sprightly kind of an uninsipid evening.

But I begin to apprehend that I shall soon grow weary of my situation, unless
 I can

I can be so happy as to contrive some means of obtaining your company. — I must flatter up this mortal of a baronet, and who knows but I may bring matters to bear?



LETTER XVIII.

Lady SANXSEY to Mrs BATSON.

I AM humbled, my Nancy, to the very dust. My present condition affects me beyond what I have ever yet experienced; and I am abundantly convinced, that no misfortunes are so grievous as those that bear a consciousness along with them that we ourselves have been the author of them.

What was sickness to the misery I now endure; surrounded by sympathizing assisting

sitting friends;—nothing left unsaid, nothing left undone, to sooth the mind into peace, and relieve the suffering body?

I would gladly support myself with resolution and propriety, notwithstanding the weight of my mortifications is intolerable to me, for many reasons. To make atonement, nay, if possible, wipe off the remembrance of past follies; to preserve your heart from too great affliction; to merit the continuance of a certain person's approbation; and defeat the malice of the most unfeeling wretches upon earth; is worth a struggle.—They shall not triumph whilst my health and reason remain unaffected: should they fail,—I know not how low I may sink.

But I am miserably harrassed. No satisfaction without,—reproaches and bitter repentance within;—bandied and ridiculed on the one hand;—brow-beat and misused on the other;—is it to be borne?

Your

Your conduct as free from blame, as your heart has ever been from unworthy inclinations, how inconceivably happy are your days in comparison of mine !

An affectionate, indulgent, and discreet child ; a faithful, obliging, and tender wife ; — a sincere, constant, and invaluable friend ; — and a kind, judicious, nay almost prophetic adviser ; is not the opposite fate we have incurred most incontestably just ? Had I but beheld you with the same eyes some few months ago, how great would have been my deliverance ! — But no. I should then have retained my propensity to error (which nothing but the severe hand of affliction was able to eradicate,) and perhaps should have plunged myself into evils beyond even what could reach me in my present state.

You must allow me to say, that the forfeiture of one affection, that is so unmeritedly continued to me, would have exceeded
a mil-

a million other calamities; and that the certainty, that however I may suffer in the world's opinion, I shall be amply recompensed there; that my undue persecutions, as he was the innocent cause of them, will not fail to endear me to his heart; spreads a gleam of satisfaction and consolation over the whole dark scene, and will bear me through a long, long succession of difficulties.

The cruel knight, exulting Kitty, and base surgeon, are the only companions I have allowed me. The servants are all creatures of Sir Matthew's chusing; Argos-eyed, malicious-minded, unfeeling. — Tears would but expose me to ridicule; — an outrageous behaviour would but furnish them with weapons against me; — and even my command of temper and constrained resignation subjects me to the vilest of suspicions and censure. — Do you not think, my sister, I have a hard card to play? — Yet be assured I will play it with judgment, and have

have hope (however extravagant) that the game will still be mine.

A high spirit has ever been imputed to me;—but can any meekness, any forbearance, surpass what I now practise? Who would have imagined, that she who was so susceptible of every the most minute indignity;—whose pride was flaming out almost before the shadow of provocation could reach it;—who was so tenacious of her rights and privileges, that, in order to secure them from infringement, she would defend them before they could be justly said to be attacked;—could ever have tamely submitted to such unexpected, such unjustifiable restraint?

But do not put a better construction on my behaviour than it deserves. I still seek, I still thirst for admiration, though of a more substantial kind than usual;—for the truth is, my sentiments and inclination have taken a quite new turn.

What

What does my good father say of his mortified daughter's conduct?—In what estimation am I held by your generous husband? If they are severe in their censures, where shall I hide my head?—But it is impossible; they are, as far as human frailty will admit, the same to-day, yesterday, and to-morrow.—They are endued with the most lively sensations of humanity;—every religious duty is strictly observed by them; their hearts, their arms, will ever be open to the repentant, consequently their compassion and good wishes will be mine.

How, in the wanton gaiety of my disposition, have I thrown aside your salutary epistles, as dull and phlegmatic!—I am sensible of the fate such a letter as this would have met with from me;—but it is my friend and sister who will receive it, and to have me somewhat rational will be a recommendation with her beyond the most brilliant strokes of humour.—If I forbear writing until I can meet with an agree-

able subject, I fear I must wait till time would be no more, at least with

Your's, &c. &c.



LETTER XIX.

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

NOthing new, Ned, under the sun.—
Your old friend colonel Dingley no longer exists;—he has for some days been transmigrated into John Jones, an humble one-ey'd Welchman, and servant to captain Briton, a gentleman you are unacquainted with : in which capacity he and his wife, a pretty spruce handy young woman, arrived safe, late last night, at Portsmouth, accompanied likewise by honest Matt Jackson, the colonel's once choice companion and very great favourite.

A black bandage over the left eye, an intolerable stoop in the shoulders, and a pair of awkward dangling arms, are all the personal perfections this John Jones can boast. — How strange a metamorphosis of your quondam strutting friend! — The good wife is to continue only one five minutes longer in this corrupt place, as she has relations to visit, in a distant part of the country; but John is to be conducted, immediately after her departure, to Jackson's cottage, there to enjoy pleasures unknown to aspiring hearts.

However colonel Dingley, by one singular attachment, suffered his life to be a continued gloom, in the person of John Jones, he is far from being an object of compassion. He can boast as indulgent a master as ever fell to worthy lad's share; has free access to his purse; their wardrobe is in common; and when John is disposed to crack a chearful bottle, he is by no means deemed an unacceptable tête-à-tête, for the captain.

The truth is, that this noble captain Briton has not a single spark of pride in his whole composition ;—nor is it possible to persuade him that this simple servant (because he is happily possessed of the reputation of an honest fellow) is not a more respectable and valuable person, than the simpering countenanced, but base-hearted lord.

Poor Matt was sincerely grieved at losing his patron ; but as the calamity was irretrievable, he was too much the hero not to submit with a soldierly resignation.

* * * * *

Saturday Evening.

Never was any thing so comfortable as my present situation : the grateful cottagers make but little or no distinction between me and their own son, as they understand I was his friend in his hour of affliction, and an equal favourite with

colonel Dingley — which is more than sufficient to engage their warmest services and attachment.

Captain Briton goes to-morrow to Sanxsey church, on purpose to feast his eyes with a view of Miss Hutchens; who it seems has been some time upon a visit at the baronet's, sorely to the mortification of her amiable cousin.

From the love I bear her, I have frequently made her the subject of my conversation, and have given him an honest description of both her mind and person; and, would you believe it? he is become so enamoured of them, by the mere strength of imagination, that had we not so unexpectedly found her in our very mouths on our first arrival, he had resolved to ride post to London, in order, if possible, to recommend himself to her favour.

He

He has a friend or two whom he intended calling upon in this part of the world, when he had happily succeeded with the lady ; therefore, her present situation will save him much difficulty and fatigue. — He is a very pretty martial looking figure, — sports his Brussels ruffles and diamond ring, — and has a fund of elegant small-talk at his fingers ends ; therefore if Miss Kitty should make a conquest of his heart, and he vigorously attacks her's, who knows what may happen ?



Sunday Evening.

The business is done, Ned. — Miss Kate has shot the captain's heart through and through, and he is preparing to begin a regular siege : he was for storm, but I say, no. I love people should use their own discretion upon these occasions ; we are sure no provisions can be carried into the garrison without our knowledge, as we

have already secured every pass; therefore the lady's strength and resolution shall be brought to the test, by being starved into compliance.

He ogled her so particularly even on this his first reconnoitring, as to attract her observation; and instead of receiving rebukive, he protests she bestowed many encouraging glances upon him; but how far his vanity may deceive him in the affair, I will not be answerable.

Sir Matthew and a certain lady were likewise at church.—One sigh for old acquaintance sake is but natural.—The captain describes her as still lovely, though pale and dejected.—How the colonel would have raved at the recollection of what she ought to have been, had he heard this report!—He would rather have lost his life than have suffered Sir Matthew to persist in this cruel and unjust treatment of her;—he would have left nothing unat-

tempted, nothing unaccomplished, to clear her reputation from that slur, the blackest malice alone could ever have fix'd upon it;—he would—but as for poor John, he can only wish it was possible to produce some happy change in her affairs, for poverty and ignorance must restrain him from even one preposterous scheme, which could not fail to expose him to contempt, mortification, and disappointment, instead of rendering him serviceable, and occasion Miss Pittborough an increase of insult and base severity.



LETTER XX.

Miss HUTCHENS to Miss BINFIELD.

RESTORED to new life, how agreeably was I surprised, my dear, this blessed morning, to find a well-dressed officer in so mean, so dismally situated, a church, as the one I at present frequent. The congregation, except the baronet's family, consists merely of a handful of miserable rustics, the inhabitants of an irregular range of thatched hovels at about a mile's distance.

The poor wretches were utterly incapable of devotion ; — the elegant stranger's dazzling coat, immense genteel sword, and, in short, whole appearance so perfectly suitable and consistent with the man
of

of fashion, petrified them with astonishment and admiration.

I had the pleasure soon to perceive that he was a man of gallantry.—He singled me out, not in preference to the Hottentots, but her languishing ladyship, as best meriting his attention and contemplation. I protest the unexpectedness of his presence, and the distinction he was pleased to pay me in the face of all beholders, inspired me with uncommon vivacity.—I played off a few attractions;—had the satisfaction to perceive they were not thrown away upon him;—and in our return home, putting my head out of the window, from a curiosity I could not restrain, with rapture discovered that he was jogging after us in close conference with one of Sir Matthew's servants.

My lady appeared wholly abstracted from this scene, that communicated such delight to my heart; nay, I question if she

she was sensible of the least addition to the congregation :—her vanity sleeps,—and she has for some time made no other use of her once killing eyes, than to read, weep, and behold common objects.

The knight is a little smart upon me, and accuses me of having committed deliberate murder. He says, “ he never saw me “ to such advantage in his life—perfectly irresistible ;—but it is both cruel and unjustifiable to attack a stranger in so close, “ so vigorous a manner, as to deprive him “ of all possibility of resistance or defence.”

This piece of raillery was suggested by the buzz that ran through the family, so soon as we reach'd our gloomy habitation, that Miss Hutchens had made a conquest ;—but as we are most horribly remote from every amusement, and the baronet keeps but little company, except his companions of the hunt, I almost despair of this charming adventure producing any happy effects.

I own if he is a man of spirit and address, it would not be an unconquerable difficulty to introduce himself, and a little flirtation highly eligible at this juncture, on my part; for the colonel's abrupt departure, — unabated dislike, — and every mortifying and discouraging circumstance of that most disagreeable affair, have sunk my gaiety to so low an ebb, that I even languish for dissipation.

Shew me the woman, either in town or country, that can behold a red coat with indifference? — There is a bewitching *je ne sçai quai* in the very colour, — and all your fine tall fellows, from the uniformity of their honourable livery, are in much the same degree striking. Indeed, I must allow that the colonel has infinitely the advantage of this stranger in both features and figure; — but his stubborn neglect has piqued me unspeakably, — and I begin to be convinced both of the folly and absurdity of labouring to fix so frigid and singular

gular a heart, especially after the ravage her ladyship's conduct has made in it;—therefore, I am so far from being averse to the devoirs of this wandering knight, which some peculiar chance has cast in my way,—that I protest I shall be somewhat chagrined, though I cannot say entirely disappointed, if I never behold him more.

Sir Matthew resumed his raillery after dinner, far from disagreeably, and has promised to do every thing in his power, towards procuring me the additional pleasure of a gay acquaintance:—he says, he is so extremely sensible of the heavy dull life I lead, and how uneasily in reality (though patiently in appearance) it must be supported, that he thinks it incumbent upon him to pursue every step that is in the least degree promising of amusement.

I confess his conversation was never more pleasing to me than at that period, as it communicated a cheering hope to my

my breast, not utterly inconsistent with probability. You may judge how desirable the enlargement of my acquaintance must be, when I tell you, that the baronet and Mr. Surgeon (who I believe, by the bye, feels a growing tendre for the wife of his friend) are the only persons I have had an opportunity of conversing with ever since my arrival.—I have had a distant prospect, indeed, of a whole crowd of bucks, with heated complexions, and all the rapture of eager pursuit dancing in their eyes;—but the hounds have soon forced them from my sight, and nothing has remained but odious inanimates.

With you the case was widely different: we were within a comfortable distance of public diversions; and as our dispositions and sentiments were exactly similar, even our most retired hours had their pleasures.—That we could but be re-united!

Tuesday

Tuesday Night.

Sir Matthew has proved himself a man of honour, and introduced captain Briton (the beau already mentioned). at four o'clock this afternoon, to your happy friend. Upon my word, he far exceeds my most flattering expectations, and treats her silent, dissatisfied, lumpish ladyship with proper neglect.

Nothing can be more lively or assiduous :—he sings some very pretty soft songs, —says the most engaging pretty things, —and, in short, has diffused such an air of gaiety around, that I could fancy it all enchantment. He is just returned from abroad ;—his dress and behaviour bespeak him a man of family and fortune ;—and he has innumerable recommendations of taste, wit, &c. &c.

I fancy

I fancy my lady would rather be excused giving us her company, but she makes it a point to avoid all singularity; therefore condescends to treat this guest (as she can make no reasonable objection to him) with the utmost cold complaisance.

The colonel cannot fail of being brought to her remembrance, by the presence of this captain, as their cloaths are perfectly alike.—I have observed her to sigh many times,—but that is no unusual thing with her, except indeed, that she has breathed them this afternoon with an uncommon degree of softness. We are to ride out together;—to walk, and sweetly *conversing forget all time*;—we are to be partners at a ball Sir Matthew promises to procure us;—and, in fine, lead a life of mortality, not inanitation.

The baronet pick'd him up, it seems, in his own grounds;—the captain had strolled,

strolled, as he acknowledged, for many hours (you may guess the attraction), and being somewhat weary, was seated upon a style with a flute in his hand, when Sir Matthew popped upon him.

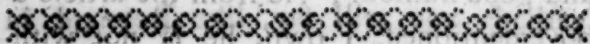
Some little civilities passed;—the baronet immediately recognized him, and as a genteel appearance in the country, especially of the military kind, is a sufficient recommendation, he invited him to his house, to partake of a friendly dish of tea, and our conversation.

Sir Matthew tells me the captain was rather confused at the almost unhopèd-for pleasure he thus kindly offered him, —and which he embraced with apparent satisfaction and delight.—We have him here, my girl, however, and if we do not keep him, it will be our own faults.

I am determined from this very day, to banish all unavailing wishes respecting the

Mrs PITTBOROUGH. 129

the colonel from my heart ;—and resolve (perhaps you will say, like Reynard in the fable, but no matter, if it does but answer my purpose) since I cannot get him, to think no more of him. I will endeavour to persuade myself that he is far from the fine looking fellow I was wont to consider him ; and as in all probability I shall never see him again, I do not despair of being successful.—No mighty affair for a colonel to be superseded by a captain, especially as the one is so very forbidding, the other so engaging in his behaviour, at least, so far as relates to me.



LETTER XXI.

Lady SANXSEY to Mrs. BATSON.

KITTY is upon the high ropes;— she has picked up a swain (with the baronet's kind assistance) that she is apparently delighted with. I was greatly apprehensive that her satisfaction would have been productive of much uneasiness to me, but have been most agreeably disappointed.

My persecution for the three days this young fellow has been with us, has almost totally subsided. He treats me with all that distant respect I could either wish or desire: and as he has recommended himself to Miss Kitty by the fineness of his cloaths, and a profusion of complaisance;— to the baronet, by his facetiousness
and

and good humour ;—so from the article above-mentioned, I own, he is not without some share of my approbation.

Captain Briton, though by no means handsome, is really very agreeable ; he seems naturally to have more of honesty and humanity in his composition, than folly or effeminacy ; but in order to please such ladies as his present flame, he renders himself not many removes from a finished coxcomb.

His behaviour, however, is at times very inconsistent and contradictory, from his adapting it with great judgment to the humour and inclinations of his immediate companion.—With Sir Matthew he sings a good song ;—takes his glass freely, tho' not indiscretely ;—and throwing off the fop both in appearance and conversation, is quite the plain downright soldier (a character he has heard that gentleman greatly extol) ; for, however fribbling him-

self, he is far from disliking masculine company.

With me, as it has happened more than once in the three days that we have been alone for a few moments, he is serious, reflecting, and tenderly obliging. Compassion seems to soften his eye; his accent is the accent of benevolence; and if I am not greatly mistaken, frankness and candour are his most prevailing characteristics. — Yet on Kitty's approach he so instantly and naturally assumes that idle gaiety peculiar to her taste, that, I confess, I know not what to make of him.

Sir Matthew's acquaintance with him was mere accident. He brought him to tea with us; and after the first ceremonies had in some measure familiarized us, — he began to trifle so prettily with Miss Kitty; — amused the baronet so agreeably; — and at the same time bestowed some little, not unacceptable, notice upon your poor long neglected.

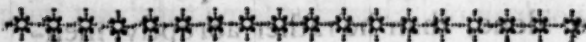
neglected sister ; — that in the end we were all so well-pleased with him as to be unwilling to lose him : and on his offering to take his leave, — Sir Matthew so warmly solicited him to favour us with his company for a few days ; obviating every objection he made, respecting his being unprepared and unprovided for so unexpected a civility, and that the family he belonged to would be alarmed at his absence, by proposing to send a servant to acquaint them with his place of residence, and procure him what necessaries he stood in need of ; that he at length yielded, on condition that he might be permitted to add the incumbrance of a favourite servant to the one he feared he himself should prove ; all which was settled to his satisfaction, and here we have had him ever since.

As an instance of his goodness of heart, I must mention the humane attention he expressed to this favourite domestic's hap-

piness, to whom he professed himself
 greatly indebted. — “The poor fellow,”
 said he, “cannot boast any personal ad-
 vantages;—he has one misfortune that
 proved a great denial to him for some
 time—(the loss of an eye, ladies, in
 an honourable and worthy cause). With
 me, indeed, it had a contrary effect;—
 it was his greatest recommendation;—
 as in my opinion, one eye that evinced
 a valuable heart, was a thousand degrees
 preferable to both the former, with
 only a void for the latter.—I took him
 therefore into my service; and he has
 on so many occasions demonstrated an
 affection for me nearly paternal, and
 is ever so deeply afflicted when alarmed
 by either the uncertainty or danger of
 my situation, that I own the pleasure
 I should otherwise enjoy in this good
 company, would have a continual alloy,
 from the irrepressible reflection of the
 pain I should occasion him.” This,
 together, with the behaviour already men-
 tioned,

tioned, renders him the most approved companion I have for some time met with.

There is one circumstance relative to him, however, that I could wish had been otherwise; as it revives all those sensations in my breast, you so ardently wish me to lose for ever.—He belongs to the army, my Nancy, dresses agreeable to his profession, and has been only one week returned from abroad.—Can you expect my curiosity to sleep? will you not allow it to be both natural, grateful, and innocent, to wish I could with decency enquire — But do not be concerned; the whole world should not bribe me to commit so great an impropriety.—I may feel anxieties,—but I will confine them to my own breast, or, what is exactly the same thing, to the breast of my friend.



LETTER XXII.

From the same.

I Have been a good deal discomposed by captain Briton's introduction of a subject I am still unequal to: it might be kindly intended;—but the effect, for that instant, was most palpably cruel.

We have a second addition to our family, the blessed Surgeon, my best of friends: Sir Matthew could not be content without his presence.——We were all walking in the garden after tea, conversing on indifferent subjects, when unexpectedly the baronet, Miss Kitty, and the last arrived visitant flew away, in order to decide some simple dispute relative to a prospect, or some such trifle.

Captain

Captain Briton no sooner perceived we
 were alone, than he rather abruptly men-
 tioned the poor injured colonel. "I,"
 said he, "madam, was prepared by that
 "gentleman to admire the beauties of
 "your character, long before I had the
 "pleasure of seeing you.—You are the
 "continual subject of his conversation;
 "—and he has repeatedly enjoined me,
 "if ever I was so happy as to be introduced
 "to your acquaintance, to assure you,
 "that his friendship and highest appro-
 "bation is as much your's as ever.—
 "Nay, madam, I will acknowledge that
 "it was owing to the interest he takes
 "in your happiness, and in order to ex-
 "ecute the commission he has charged
 "me with, of remitting an account of
 "your health and situation, that I made
 "that seemingly accidental visit to your
 "church; and whatever attractions Miss
 "Kitty can boast, the serving my friend
 "in so essential a point as his peace and
 "happiness, was my principal induce-
 "ment

" ment for loitering in that field, where,
 " beyond my best hopes, I was so fortu-
 " nate as to meet with Sir Matthew ; for,
 " notwithstanding I was far from flat-
 " tering myself with obtaining the op-
 " portunity I now enjoy, of accomplish-
 " ing the utmost extent of his wishes, I
 " was unwilling on so important a busi-
 " ness to rely upon common report re-
 " specting your health, especially as your
 " countenance conveyed no favourable
 " idea of it ; and my scheme was to have
 " found means of chatting with some of
 " the domestics, from whom I might have
 " drawn more certain intelligence. — For-
 " give me, madam, if I have disordered
 " you, — and be assured it shall be the last,
 " as it is the first time : but may I pre-
 " sume to tell him your good wishes at-
 " tend him ? — He was determined never
 " more to expose himself to interviews
 " that must cost him so very dear, and
 " the method he has pursued cannot fail
 " of being effectual ; for he is now mak-

“ing a second tour of Europe.”—He
 paused, and as I was sufficiently collected,
 I told him,

“That I could not but acknowlege he
 “had occasioned me many mortifying re-
 “membrances; but as I was now no less
 “changed in mind than person, since his
 “friend’s acquaintance with me, I was
 “far from being unwilling he should in-
 “form him of both: That the first was an
 “obligation I owed to him; the second
 “intirely my own work, and I was un-
 “solicitous concerning it:—but that a
 “sense of the injury I had done him, and
 “his unexampled generosity in pardoning
 “it, had taught me the necessary lesson
 “of eradicating many errors I had been
 “prone to, and regulating my conduct
 “by the rules of reason and propriety:—
 “That my gratitude would ever be his,
 “and that he had still the power of in-
 “creasing it;—for that, in establishing
 “his own peace, he would infallibly re-
 “store

“store mine, by enabling me to reconcile myself in a great measure to the most unworthy action of my life.”

“You are so much the gentleman, sir,” continued I, “that I cannot apprehend the least indecorum from you, and therefore will forbear mentioning how highly improper it would be for me to listen to any future conversation of this kind,—for very many reasons.—You are now in a country where you cannot long be a stranger to a scandalous story, in which your friend has no inconsiderable share; but I do beg you will make no other use of that knowledge, than sparing me upon every future occasion; as the colonel’s being made acquainted with it, could only be productive of much uneasiness to him, if no worse consequence.”

The captain politely bowed, telling me in the same instant, that I might depend upon

upon his avoiding every step that could possibly be either offensive or disagreeable;—and as our strolling company rejoined us immediately, the whole passed off with a tolerable grace.

What do you think of my conduct upon this occasion?—Ought I to have said more? Could I have said less?—Was there one article to excite the slightest displeasure? All that concern in his countenance, all the little attentions and assiduities I observed in his behaviour, are now accounted for;—and I have the satisfaction to perceive, that pity not contempt informs his bosom, notwithstanding how justly I merit the latter.

Indeed, my dear girl, I find my heart more at ease than usual.—The dissipations the colonel will necessarily meet with,—and a long continued absence, must restore him to that happiness I had so cruelly interrupted.—I have but one narrow, and
perhaps

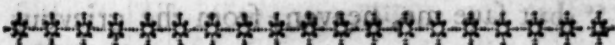
perhaps improper sentiment concerning him ;—" May he become as cold as refig-
" nation and friendship can make him !—
" but save me, heaven, from the grievous
" misfortune of living to know he has
" devoted himself to another !"

How little did I expect things to take so favourable a turn ! I told you I should surmount my late depression.—Sir Matthew seems to have forgot that ever I offended him ; and the kind Kitty, from having neither an opportunity, nor the least encouragement to treat me with insolence, conducts herself with tolerable decent civility.

The captain's man has begged leave to visit some relations during his master's continuance with us.—I was rather sorry we did not see him, as from the mention the captain made of his goodness of heart, I should have taken a pleasure in looking at him ;—but, however, you will believe

I can

I can without difficulty support the disappointment.



LETTER XXIII.

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

THIS same John Jones, Ned, is a lad of inconceivable resolution.—He had a temptation cast in his way a few days ago that brought it to a severe test:—the conflict was great; a whole army of passions endeavoured to shake it;—but it, nevertheless, came off victorious.

Captain Briton, who is a man of a most enterprising genius, and insinuating manners, has not only got footing himself at Sir Matthew Sanxsey's,—but the dog had the modesty to solicit permission to send
for

for John, and the good fortune (as he deemed it) to obtain it.

But too many objections lay in the poor fellow's way;—the hazard with respect to his own repose,—and the lady's dearer reputation,—were not to be surmounted:—for as the world is so ingeniously malicious as to strike deadly strokes without even a shadow of foundation, it was but natural to apprehend its severest censure, if circumstances were once ambiguous, or unguarded;—and it was far from being improbable in the present instance, if ever a certain frolic should get air, that many would conclude there was more of love for the one lady, than a desire of humbling another in the case;—especially if such an advantage was taken of it, as introducing a suspicious and highly improper person under the baronet's roof.

The

The business I am now engaged in, at present, has so far contributed to the recovery of my spirits, together with the agreeable accounts I receive of the ease and satisfaction Miss Pittborough seems to enjoy, that I really have but little to complain of.—Matt and I pass our evenings at cribbage, or in some innocent conversation, over a mug of his mother's own beer.—It would be the highest feast for your humanity, could you but behold the change that happiness, and an exemption from labour, has produced in these worthy creatures' countenances :—where the furrows of anxiety or old age are incapable of being filled up, contentment seems more immediately to smile, as if ambitious to make every atonement for having so long neglected such extraordinary worth.

Neatness and well-regulated plenty are conspicuous in each corner of this late unsightly cabin; whilst sighs, tears, and

every other attendant on cruel disappointment, shrink behind my chair, in visible apprehension of being totally discarded.

Never was woman more extolled for internal graces than Miss Pittborough by my happy friend!—Her person I have reason to believe has undergone a severe alteration, but the beauties of her mind shine forth in all their native lustre. Vivacity has given place to matronly decorum; but as her reserve is adorned with sweetness, sensibility, and politeness, not the result of sour dissatisfaction, or sly hypocrisy, it is unspeakably amiable, and must be permanent.

The captain, from a too forward zeal to communicate a ray of pleasure to Miss Pittborough's heart, as he would conceive her dejection to be chiefly on the colonel's account, ventured to mention him.—Oh, Ned, what lovely, though I apprehend
painful

painful confusion did it not occasion her!—but it was the confusion of friendship, not displeasure.

She listened with willing attention to a fictitious account of his wandering resolution; and imagines him by this time on some distant part of the continent;—where Briton assured her, her image would be his companion; his undiminished love, the quickest pulsation of his heart, and a knowledge of her happiness, the most essential information for his peace.

She not only permitted but desired him to give his friend assurances of her good wishes, her gratitude, and approbation of his conduct.—How salutary, how reviving, how flattering this condescension!—Then with a prudence that does honour to her sex, begged, that the subject might never more be introduced, for reasons his own good-sense could not permit him to be ignorant of;—and such traces of sa-

tisfaction have ever since been visible in her aspect, as evinces the success of this friendly attempt to comfort her, by putting a period to her suspense, respecting a fugitive's fate.

Delicacy, Ned, is a prime, nay, an almost peculiar perfection of the fair sex: we admire, we subscribe to the excellence of it, even in the disappointment of our wishes.

Though nature may have been sparing of personal charms, yet with this endowment, the young can never fail to please; and without it, the utmost loveliness must sink into disesteem: it is as imperceptible in its operation (where an innate principle), yet as active and inexhaustible as the blood, that now quits, and now returns to the beating heart; and its beauty is equally concealed from its possessor.

Did the innocent and inexperienced but know its value, what a happy regulator it would prove of their conduct!—Instead of making unworthy concessions to gratify the importunity of the ungenerous and designing, it would teach them to look them into confusion, and awe them into virtue.

How fatal that tender sensibility, that artless apprehension of wounding the peace of a lover, by judicious rigour!—It is a wound that heals without any application;—and so far from proving of bad consequence to either party, confirms the attachment of the one, and displays the worth of the other.

Such are its effects in a single state;—but in the married it becomes of still more importance.—The double trust a wife is charged with (her husband's honour, no less than their own, depending upon her good conduct) demands a double exertion

of this all-saving virtue;—for it is not enough that her conscience is free from blame; but her behaviour must bid defiance to suspicion.

What, in appearance, can either be more natural, or innocent, than that Miss Pittborough should have expressed a friendly curiosity concerning the colonel's fate?—Where the offence against modesty or decorum?—She was alone with a friend;—she knew him to be at an immeasurable distance, and incapable of every thought to the prejudice of her honour or reputation;—she could rely upon her own integrity of intention:—therefore, why not for a moment indulge the remembrance of his love;—and hear his sentiments and declarations once more repeated by this chosen confidant?

But, no: her delicacy secured her from acting so indiscreet a part.—Might not the captain conclude she had a more tender

tender motive than friendship for making him the subject of her conversation?—Would he not communicate both the foundation and nature of such an inference?—Might not the colonel be more than half inclined to consider them as an indirect encouragement to flatter himself that on one contingency she was ready to be his, if he even resisted the temptation of casting himself in her way, from being assured he was far from being indifferent to her.

The captain has many friends; takes his glass with a freedom that warms his blood, though many degrees inferior to intoxication.—Might he not in the overflowings of his good-humour betray the distinction she paid him by her confidence,—as from the very nature of the subject would seem to imply,—especially, as it was ever introduced at stolen periods, from a consciousness of its unsuitableness for every ear.—These friends, in the course

of their connexions, would probably be as unguarded as himself; and for the sake of embellishment, exaggerate the whole matter;—until he would be absolutely constituted a go-between, a person introduced merely for the convenience of interchanging, or communicating the parties sentiments;—whilst they themselves would be so far from suspecting the consequence of their indiscretion, that they would even shudder at the private idea of such a practice. Notwithstanding which, every unfavourable report would again be revived, every little circumstance recollected;—until it was worked up into the very worst that could be propagated;—until the very worst would be believed.

I need not trace the consequences, as they are self-evident;—not even an incident common to humanity, by giving the colonel a justifiable opportunity of renewing his pretensions, could wipe off the

the stain;—and the mortifying reflection, that the censure had appearances, though not reality for its foundation, would deprive them of that all-consoling consciousness that ever attends blameless innocence.

Adieu.



LETTER XXIV.

MISS HUTCHENS to MISS BINFIELD.

YOU tell me that you die to know how I go on, and whether my captain's admiration and allegiance is augmented or diminished.—I with pleasure confess the former;—we are now upon terms, talk over our intentions without reserve,—and are determined soon to put it out of the nature of things to disappoint us.

I know

I know not why, but I have my forebodings, that this match would never meet with my mother's approbation; — therefore, in order to save myself from the mortification of a denial, I do not propose asking her consent; — but shall make her acquainted with it, — so soon as it has taken place.

I have no notion, I must confess, of all that authority your parents assume upon such an occasion, especially as it is an authority, they themselves, when under the same circumstances, do not scruple to disclaim.

My mother's conduct was not unexceptionable with respect to this article (though it is true, she did at last teaze granny out of her consent); therefore, you know I can plead indirect example for my sanction.

My

My fortune is as fixed as fate (except what my mother may have saved out of her jointure, which is never worth regarding), nor can her most inveterate displeasure cause the least diminution in it. — I have not enquired into the captain's last penny, according to your prudent elderly maxims, nor do I wish to give myself any trouble concerning it:—his behaviour bespeaks him a gentleman,—his profession intitles him to consideration; and if he cannot boast a great estate,—why I think we must be satisfied with his obtaining some higher advancement,—and I may still be the colonel's lady.

In short, you need not now be told that my home was by no means to my mind:—my mother, indeed, does not exact, but insensibly steals my compliance with her will.—Now I cannot but be hurt upon such occasions,—though I am unable to prevent it; for is it not the highest reflection upon one's understanding to be drawn

drawn in to forego one's inclinations, though in themselves of ever such little consequence, by the artful management of any person living?

Then I find myself immoderately impatient to have the whole inspection and direction of my own conduct.—Is it not mortifying, when an enchanting party is proposed, to have mamma referred to for her approbation?—to have one's dress regulated by a fancy twenty years older than one's own?—to have one's expences limited?—and, finally, to be watched as a cat does a rat, to prevent one's forming improper connexions?

I have often told you what I would do, if I was punished with such a father as your's;—and if I do not fit this mother of mine, for all the restraint she has hitherto heaped upon me;—why then consider me in the light of a mere bully, fond of big words, but capable of little practices.

The captain has laid down a very pretty plan of operation.—He is the most delightful, gay, entertaining companion you ever met with, and so sly a wretch, there's no enduring him. Would you believe it, he has the artifice to take her ladyship in her own toils?—So demure!—so sober!—so humane!—so obliging! that it is easy to perceive she is prodigiously pleased with him;—and we have the highest scenes of ridicule, when alone, that can be conceived.

I too humour the imposition;—affect immense friendship;—and have prevailed upon Sir Knight to relax an abundant degree of his surliness.

She is really become a very convenient, inoffensive creature, therefore intitled to some encouragement. Mr. Surgeon beholds her with different eyes; but she is so wrapt up in reserve, that he is compelled to remain at humble distance:—he draws

draws off the lord of the mansion for want of better employment, who, to compleat the preposterous ridicule of his character, is now studying anatomy, and the animal œconomy :—the good dull soul retires to her closet, and leaves us for whole successive hours, intire master of the field.

I never was so lively, so degagéé, in my whole life, as at present; how happy, how pleasing, the union of hearts!—The stiff starch'd irreclaimable colonel has intirely lost my approbation.—To love and not be beloved, how unnatural!—I am astonished at my own idle perverseness.

My lady is grown not only sedate, but religious. I was in hopes she would have compleated her character, by absolute enthusiasm: but, no: she will be equally lukewarm upon every occasion; excess even of religion and virtue is held with her as the beginning of folly, and I do assure you, she keeps a sharp look-out, to prevent a relapse.

Well, I honour her at this period, for setting up for a reputation ; — she will admirably support her pretensions, especially if that bewitching colonel should revisit England, and once more cast himself at her feet.

The war is now happily at an end ; happily indeed for me, or I might ere now have lost my captain ; and yet that fantastical fellow, instead of repenting the absurdity of a voluntary banishment, is hopping from Dan to Beer-sheba, with the same meaning that admiral Anson's enemies report he made his voyage round the world, the merely having got out of his latitude. — But let him dispose of himself as he pleases, I shall not now be offended at it.

My captain is prepared to admire you : — it is settled, that our first visit shall be to your sweet self ; therefore, you must not be surprized, if you should see a carriage

riage within these ten days, with all imaginable expedition flying up your avenue. —I will present him,—you shall approve him,—and then, my dear, my felicity will be rendered compleat.

They tell me Portsmouth is a miserable town;—is it not strange that I should have lived five months at the trifling distance of twelve miles only, without having once visited it?—But what is an excursion without a party? Next week we are all to go—the ships you know must be worth seeing—my lady, Sir Matthew, captain Briton, Miss Hutchens, and the half-licked Surgeon. He is a married man; married, for his sins I suppose, to the arrantest termagant in nature.—One great reason, perhaps, that he is so captivated by the opposite extream.—His sneaking kindness, as before hinted, is very prettily advanced: I have detected many striking symptoms in his behaviour;—but it is no affair of mine;—nor would

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Would I on any consideration meddle with it:—her ladyship's own prudence is surely a sufficient guard for her own virtue;—though I must own, if I was as grossly neglected by any he, in his majesty's whole dominions, I should be apt to seek consolation wheresoever I could find it.—I would not for an eye, an ear, or half a dozen of my precious limbs, have the captain equally attach'd to any set of petticoats,—saving your humble servant, &c.



LETTER XXV.

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

MY master has engaged himself to escort the ladies, on Monday next, to Portsmouth; nor can my attendance, he says, be dispensed with.—A new livery is bespoke;—a new bandage prepared

for my eye;—but how shall I support—
No matter, I must go through with it;
half characters are easily detected, and
who shall say I act only by halves?

But my heart, I fear, will be very un-
governable,—my behaviour very incon-
sistent;—yet if I am taken ill, your know,
—how can I help that?—The good compa-
ny will both excuse and pity me.

This monster of a surgeon, my mortal
enemy, will, I fear, bring himself even
into a worse scrape than I had intended
him, if he is not upon his guard. My
captain has alarmed me prodigiously, by
only a slight intimation, that he suspects
he has the insolence and temerity to ad-
mire my colonel's Miss Pittborough.
She is too humble, and too little attentive,
to make the discovery; the knight too
thick-headed, and too proud, to entertain
the really preposterous idea; and as for
that devil incarnate Miss Hutchens, I

am well convinced what use she would make of such an incident.—Heaven preserve the dear creature from all evil!

But, Ned, if he should dare to insult her,—his heart's blood should make atonement.—Rash as unmanly resolution!—his life is not derived from me, nor can any circumstance give me a right to deprive him of it:—I would, however, maul his pretty person so handsomely,—that he should retain palpable and visible marks of my resentment to the end of his life.

But this approaching day, this day of jubilee to every heart but mine,—how shall I survive it?—To see that loved, that amiable woman neglected by the most groveling of wretches, on the one hand;—and ogled by a mean reptile, on the other:—to see dejection over-cloud features that were formed with the most perfect symmetry;—and so apparently intitled to every

peaceful, every pleasing distinction!—But this is an ill preparation, as it impairs my already too weak abilities to sustain the encounter!—Ah poor John Jones, now, and now only, art thou in a condition to be pitied!

* * * * *

Monday Morning.

Here, Ned, you may behold honest Matt and myself prepared to sally forth on this grand expedition.—I have not slept the whole night; anxiety, apprehension, tenderness, and resentment, alternately agitate me; and I now repent exposing myself to such unequal conflicts:—but we must experience, before we will be convinced of our own insufficiency.

* * * * *

Six o'clock, P. M.

In what words shall I relate this day's adventure! an adventure, which, respecting

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ing my share in it, ought to be wrote in letters of gold :—but the blackest of characters are abundantly too fair to mention the infamous author.

I will only ask one question, and then give it history-wise,—and command your attention.—All is well, and now my pen is at your service.

How reluctantly I yielded to captain Briton's arguments, respecting the necessity of my attendance, you are already well acquainted with : happily, however, I did at length yield, and with palpitating heart, or rather, in pretty much the same condition in which a poor criminal (to the emolument of each unfeeling spectator) is dragged along by slow degrees to Tyburn, did I follow the gaily dressed captain to Sir Matthew's ;—for as the ladies had offered him a seat in the coach, from an over-strained point of complaisance, he did not think it sufficient to

meet them upon the road, and be taken up, but he would needs start with them in the first instance.

By the time we arrived, the coach was in readiness; and the Surgeon (who had slept there the preceding night, and was to squire them on horseback) had mounted his proud steed, which was pawing about the court-yard, impatient of restraint; and I could perceive that Miss Kitty, brimfull of vanity, and the knight grinning with self-complacence, only waited for the loveliest part of the company, to be ready also.

A hag, greatly resembling Mrs. Salmon's mother Shipton, entered the parlour with precipitation. I thought I should have fainted.—“No accident, I hope?” cried the Surgeon, as she passed the hall-door in her return.—“No: only my
“lady finds herself a little indisposed, and
“as she would not be an interruption to
“plea-

“pleasure she is incapable of participating, begs she may be permitted to stay at home.”

I revived insensibly on hearing a language so punctually repeated, that was by no means strange to my ears;—but casting a look upon the Surgeon, saw disappointment and chagrin had driven the *ruby* from his cheek, and that he was preparing to dismount; though for what purpose, I was unable to conjecture.

Some little dissatisfaction in the parlour was the consequence of the message they had received.—Miss Kitty flouncing into the coach, declared aloud, that she loved airs in her heart.—Sir Matthew followed, protesting he was quite of her sentiments; but he would endeavour to make her amends for the slippery trick his wife had played her, by procuring her a more eligible companion, at a friend's house, at some little distance.—The cap-

tain cast a significant glance upon me; whilst Mr. Surgeon, on being offered the vacant place in the coach, until they reached the other lady, declined it with visible confusion, — stammering out, “ That perhaps her ladyship might be so ill “ as to require his attendance ; and therefore he would wait an hour or so ; and “ as the sight was nothing new to him, “ he should be no loser, as he would do “ himself the pleasure of joining them at “ dinner.”

Captain Briton again looked upon me with meaning : — my heart understood him, — and I got off my horse unobserved by a fellow, whose deep designs, and unexpected success, absorbed every other consideration.

I entered the house soon after, at the invitation of Sir Matthew’s huntsman ; who found me so disordered, that he was by no means surprized I did not follow

my master:—he kindly conducted me to the kitchen fire, and giving me a salutary cordial, I began to be more composed. The Surgeon, in my hearing, desired Mrs. Hag to furnish him with proper apparatus for bleeding her lady;—telling her he would wait in the dressing-room for her commands:—“And as it is very early,” added he, “perhaps her ladyship may not be disposed to rise;—you had therefore better get your own breakfast, before you inform her for what purpose I remain behind.” I desired my friend the huntsman to go with me into the garden, as I hoped the air would be of use to me: he did so, and so soon as we had gained a handsome terrace, that was extended each way beyond the front range of the apartments, I began to enquire into the situation of the rooms, for entertainment, &c.—The huntsman, in gratifying my curiosity by a description of the house, informed me, that Sir Matthew’s chamber-windows commanded that walk, a circumstance

cumstance that determined me not to leave it; I therefore prevailed upon him to confine himself, for my convenience, to that spot, lest I should have any return of my fainting-fit;—a request too plausible to be refused, and we entered into more familiar conversation. I had the pleasure to find the fellow honest-hearted, and well affected towards his lady, of whom he spoke in the most compassionate and honourable terms. —The wretch!—she has, my friend, been a great sufferer,—and I fear no deliverance is at hand.—Nothing on earth could equal my miserable apprehensions!—every noise threw me into a trembling!—the Surgeon's guilty countenance—but the moment was not arrived, when my whole stock of courage and forbearance was to be brought to the test.

I believe it was only one quarter of an hour in reality (though an age in appearance) that I remained so unhappily agitated;—when the huntsman starting, cried
out,

out, "Zounds, my lady's in fits!—that's
 "her voice, I'll be sworn for it."

"Where, where, my friend," exclaimed
 I, and staring with horror,—"let us fly to
 "her assistance." "We'll call the maids,"
 returned he. The gardener's ladder hap-
 pened to stand against a jessamine tree at a
 little distance, that wanted his care.—The
 huntsman ran into the house,—whilst I
 with all imaginable expedition and dexterity,
 mounted the window,—and providentially
 saved the dearest, best of women from the
 last destruction. Barbarous ruffian!—her
 handkerchief was bound over her mouth
 like a bar of iron;—a work he had but just
 compleated,—when I with due vengeance
 seized him by the collar;—and the poor
 released half-dying creature hastened to
 unfasten the door to procure me assistance.
 —The women were so terrified at what
 they saw, that they were hardly capable of
 bestowing proper care upon their lady;—
 and had not my friend the huntsman,
 prompt-

prompted by his humane curiosity, followed close at their heels, the wretch would not only have escaped my hands, but I should likewise have been discovered:—however, by his timely interposition, both were luckily prevented.—The bandage indeed, by his struggling, was torn from my eye; but, in order to guard against a misfortune of the sort, I had that morning, by Captain Briton's advice, put on the additional covering of a large piece of sticking plaister, which remained unmoved. We instantly bound the rascal hand and foot, and locking him up in a secure closet, left him to his meditations.

The huntsman was so delighted with the part I had acted, and rejoiced at his lady's deliverance, that I was compelled to partake a bottle with him, and his mirth likewise, at least in appearance, notwithstanding my heart was bleeding for his injured mistress.

At

At length the house-keeper came down, —and gave me the comfortable information, that her lady was much better than could have been expected, considering the fright; but that her nose and mouth were greatly hurt. She had with her usual goodness enquired who she was indebted to for her preservation; and on being told it was captain Briton's servant, ordered this woman to beg, that he would wait his master's return at her house, and command every thing he should stand in need of;—adding, that as soon as she was tolerably composed, she should be glad to thank him herself for so singular a service. Thus, Ned, have I a second time rendered myself useful to this angel of a woman.—May I not flatter myself that I am yet reserved to heal all her misfortunes?

I was doubly distressed by what I heard. —To appear before her and preserve my proper character, was, I feared, impossible: to sell the service I had done her,—my ut-

ter

ter abhorrence :—but how to avoid either the one or the other, I was unable to conjecture.

Happily for us both,—when she came to recollect some few particulars of the late dreadful scene,—she had unconquerable objections to seeing me again ;— and sending me her purse, in which was twenty guineas, and a valuable ring I had observed her to wear in those days of happiness,— that are now no more,— she bid the bearer tell me, “ that she had too good an opinion of “ my understanding, to apprehend I would “ misconstrue her declining her first proposal “ of thanking me personally,—as she was “ too weak and low to bear such an inter- “ view :—that she was far from meaning “ what she then sent, as a reward for the ob- “ ligation I had conferred upon her ; for that “ she would convince me upon many future “ occasions, that she did not think any pecu- “ niary return adequate to my merit ; and “ that she heartily wished me every happi-
“ ness

“nefs this world could give.” The change in her refolution was too natural; and the motive too obvious for me to be furprised at it; and thus her delicacy refcued me from the much dreaded encounter.—I only divided the money with the huntsman, left I fhould betray myself by my generofity; and it was with great difficulty that I prevailed upon him even to accept the moiety of what he could not perfuade himfelf he was the leaft intitled to:—he has both a great and an honeft foul.

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

Ten o’clock.

The company are returned. Captain Briton was by no means furpris’d at what had happen’d; acknowleging it was no more than he had long expected from the fellow’s behaviour.—Mifs Kitty declared herfelf aftonifhed at the wretch’s audacity:—“fhe had, indeed, perceived he admired
“her ladyfhip; but as fhe had conceived it
“only

“only to be an humble hopeless passion,
“she had never thought it necessary to
“mention it.”

The baronet bit his lips,—his complexion underwent many changes,—but he did not favour them with his sentiments. As for the lady who had partook of their day's pleasure, she had luckily been set down at her own house, or she would have been a spectator of the whole scene. After we had all been examined and re-examined, they began to deliberate concerning a proper punishment for the delinquent.—The offence was insufficient to bring him to the gallows;—his circumstances and situation in life secured him from every prosecution for damages, or the more frequent satisfaction of the sword.—At length it was determined to duck him well in the horse-pond,—give him a genteel tofs or two in a blanket,—and oblige him to beg pardon for his attempt to affront a worthy family, in the public papers:—all of which it shall
be

be my business to see most punctually performed.

Honest John received the thanks and compliments of every one present ; but it was observable, that Sir Matthew's were the coldest and most constrained.— You know how much I despise him, without further comment.



LETTER XXVI.

MISS HUTCHENS to MISS BINFIELD.

ANOTHER prettypiece of business ! — This curious mortal of a surgeon has been pleased to appear in the character of Tarquin,—my lady his beautiful Lucretia ; — but as there happen'd some interruption to the performance, they neither of them shone in any extraordinary degree : — a one-eyed fellow, servant to captain Brito, was the hero that rescued her from the ravisher's hands. What a pity colonel

Dingley was absent at that extraordinary period, as the story might then have made a very elegant appearance, when modelled into coherence by some skilful hand! How unequally adventures, as well as riches, are in general distributed! — Many persons pass their whole days without meeting with one that deserves the least notice; whilst others have such a succession of them fall to their share, they know not which way to turn themselves: — Would I had been born under the latter planet!

I, however, have this consolation, that it is never too late to strike a bold stroke, and force one's self into bustle and observation: — the next fortnight, my dear, shall proclaim what I am capable of.

We had a prodigious pleasant day of it; the captain in high spirits; a good, decent, lively, plain girl, proved an excellent foil; and even the baronet said handsome things. — How little conception had we of the desperate attack her ladyship sustained? Sure-

ly this affair will wipe off all disagreeable remembrances; — Sir Matthew can no longer doubt her virtue, — She screamed, my girl, she screamed for assistance; — but the wretch was a ruffian; make the best of him.

How tenderly strung are her nerves! At present she droops, she dies. Captain Bri-

ton rather hangs his ears with concern for her; — but pity is peculiar to the brave.

How do I rejoice at the whole train of incidents that have conspired to bring me to this once hateful place! — I used to wish that this lady cousin had never slipped from under her father's wing; or at least, that my mother had not so officiously fostered her; — but had things been only one jot otherwise than they are, I had still vainly sighed for the colonel, and the captain would never have sighed for me; so that, upon the whole, I must deem myself a considerable gainer. They have pronounced a severe sentence upon the culprit; — for my

part, I wonder his ears were spared :—and if he does but get out of their hands in whole bones, he can never be sufficiently thankful. To be sure, it might have proved far from a laughable affair ; but as it did turn out, I can see no harm in confessing, that the deplorable object, when he was dragged from his den, excited both my ridicule and compassion. His neck and heels were within an ace of meeting ;—half undrest, —half starved ;—for he had lain in that condition the whole day, without being allowed the least refreshment : he was a strange spectacle !—And then his mean submissions, and meaner intreaties for pardon, rendered him thoroughly despicable.

Mamma begins to hanker after the Egyptian onions ; or, in other words, is become impatient to behold her darling daughter. —Your pardon, my good madam ; but I *fear* we shall not be so *happy* as to meet at present :—There are more words to that bargain than you are aware of.

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Do

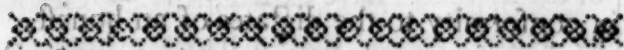
Do you conceive it possible, my dear, that all the violent affection she has hitherto professed for me, nay, on some occasions, absolutely demonstrated, can ever be extinguished by one single act of disobedience?—Can she abandon me to all the miseries of matrimony, without the least compunction?—Be it so then; for if marriages and hanging actually depend upon destiny,—it would be in vain to endeavour to avoid either the one or the other.—That same doctrine of predestination, is a very pretty doctrine for people under my circumstances;—“It was my fate, say they; “how therefore could I, weak and frail “as I am, in any degree resist?”

What a happy man this same captain, in fixing his affections upon so rational a being as your humble servant! I neither expect nor require perfection; unreasonably require what I am sensible I myself can never attain. Not one unnecessary pang have I given him; played off none of my cousin's enchanting airs and graces;—but,

in conformity to the dictates of an honest, uncorrupted nature, have neither too studiously concealed, nor too glaringly revealed my approbation and good-liking.

I apprehend I have acted with more propriety upon this occasion, than any other in my whole life; and I have reason to believe, the captain is equally satisfied with my conduct and love. So far I have condescended to observe my mother's wholesome lectures;—"Never to give pain
 "to that man's heart I meant to make my
 "husband; as I might depend upon it, that
 "the injustice at some future period would
 "be retaliated;"—with a thousand other articles, duly remembered, tho' not worth a place in this letter:—I have, or rather shall reap the benefit of them all, as I have most judiciously avoided preparing a rod for myself.

LET



LETTER XXVII.

Lady SANXSEY to Mrs. BATSON.

ALAS, my dear sister! for what insults am I reserved!—Was it not sufficient that I submitted, with almost more than human patience, to every bitter consequence of my unhappy folly?—was not the subduing my pride, vanity, and self-sufficiency, a task I found myself but ill able to perform?—that this new calamity, this new humiliation, should fall upon me, to swell the triumph my wretchedness but too evidently gives to many hearts. I shall not, however, long complain of a fate I have so justly merited;—a slow, but sure-working despair already preys upon my vitals;—and the arms of death will prove my least deceitful asylum.

But abominable wretch that I am, to look only to the misfortunes,—unmindful

of the mercies I have experienced.—It must be acknowledged, that a froward heart is not easily corrected: evil habits, when strongly confirmed by long practice, cleave close, and the rent that separates them from our nature, must be both resolute and severe.—But I will endeavour, in some measure, to methodize my thoughts, for your better comprehending them.

The gay, the all-prevailing Kitty had formed a party for an idle excursion; and I was destined to participate, or at least dissemble a participation of her pleasure; but when the morning arrived, I found myself so ill-affected to the journey, that I ventured under the sanction of my friend captain Britton's presence, to beg the company's excuse, and the baronet's permission to stay at home.

He furlily complied with what he called my perverse fancies;—Kitty was smart, as usual upon such occasions; neither of which reached my repose: and as it was very early in the morning, and I found
myself

myself inclined to sleep, I made no scruple to yield to so soft an influence.

I never at any time was suspicious myself; and in order to avoid every species of suspicion, or disagreeable treatment, I had made it a point ever since my disgrace, to leave the door of my apartment at the mercy of my inquisitive duenna, and equally inquisitive husband.

How long I had slept I am wholly ignorant;—I was however at length awakened, though not alarmed, by some one's entering the room:—but before I had time to enquire what her diligence sought after, (concluding it was the house-keeper) and why I was disturbed, contrary to my orders, —I heard the door bolted, and locked on the inside.

I drew open the curtain with precipitation; but judge of my horror and confusion, (for I am incapable of describing it) when I beheld that forward, bold surgeon,

to whose report of me I am indebted for all the mortifying reflections my character has sustained, was the person who had thus secured me to himself, as I doubted not, for the basest of purposes.

I asked him, with as much command of my temper and apprehensions as I could possibly assume, why I saw him there? He drew instantly to the bed-side, and violently seizing me, cried, “ My dear creature
“ shall be informed ;—only don’t betray
“ yourself, and your honour is safe ;—but
“ if you are so weak and simple as to
“ disregard the voice of reason and love,
“ you must take the consequence both of
“ my roughness and the world’s censure ;
“ a world that is prepared to judge you
“ with the utmost severity, from errors in
“ your conduct in which I had no share.
“ —I was charmed with you the first mo-
“ ment I beheld you, and have long wished
“ for some such happy opportunity of be-
“ ing upon the tender terms with you, as
“ must

"must hereafter be the case, unless you
 "are bent upon your own destruction."
 "Hear me, sir," cried I, "I beseech you
 "to hear my fixed determination. I ac-
 "knowledge I am sensible no less of the
 "power you have obtained over me,
 "than the good-nature of the world.
 "—Your generosity upon this occasion
 "would intitle you to my highest grati-
 "tude;—nor would I ever complain of
 "what is past:—but as to purchasing the
 "shadow of a reputation at the expence
 "of my honour,—be assured I never
 "will;—and if you do oblige me to alarm
 "the house, my cries shall never cease
 "until they have brought some one to my
 "assistance, or my strength entirely ex-
 "hausted;—and perhaps, in so great an
 "exigence, I may find it little inferior
 "to your own.—Spare, spare me, there-
 "fore, the necessity of exerting it;—
 "leave my room immediately, and every
 "return you can reasonably ask, or I with
 "propriety grant, shall be yours."

"Madam,

“Madam,” returned the villain, “as a
“proof how much rather I would owe
“my success to your favour than com-
“pulsion, I will for a few moments de-
“lay shewing you what I am capable of
“performing.—I have contrived my mat-
“ters too well to apprehend interruption :
“consider, therefore, how idle it is to re-
“serve yourself wholly for a man who
“neglects and disregards you, and for
“whom you never had, nor ever can
“have the slightest degree of affection.
“You have suffered in your reputation ;
“if innocently, revenge yourself on a
“base world, by an action that can never
“transpire to glut its malice, and make
“me who love you, and am capable of
“serving you in many particulars, com-
“pletely happy.”

“My God !” exclaimed I, clapping
my hands together, “what an alterna-
“tive !—either to tear open the late
“wounds of my reputation afresh, by
“furnishing the public with a new fund
“for

“ for scandal, or, in order to preserve it in
 “ its present doubtful state, submit to
 “ every kind of abuse brutality and lust
 “ are capable of exciting. No, sir, I
 “ have nothing more to offer; you know
 “ my final resolution.”

A strong handkerchief which he had drawn out of his pocket during my last speech, and, unperceived by me, rolled up to a comfortable thickness, was now unexpectedly clapped before my mouth, which (except by one loud scream that escaped me in the same instant it reached my face) effectually deprived me of every power or possibility of calling assistance. He was so inhuman as to tie it in such a manner, that I concluded I must die for want of breath, my nostrils being greatly confined.

He held both my hands in one of his, without proceeding to one liberty; and coolly taking my garters from a chair, “ These,” said he, “ will answer the purpose”

“pose of fetters ; and so, my good madam,
“you will be quite secured.”

I now gave myself over for lost : the agony of my mind is inconceivable ;—when, beyond probability or expectation, a man suddenly bolted in at the window, and delivered me from every threatening evil.

He was so strong a fellow, and disappointment had rendered him so desperate, that had I fainted, I know not what might have been the consequence to my deliverer ;—but happily I had both so much strength and presence of mind, to unfasten the door, and let in half a dozen people, who were listening to, though unable to comprehend, the noise they heard.—The women soon got me to bed, whilst the men took proper care of the monster.

They with great difficulty removed the obstruction of the handkerchief, and I was once more permitted to breathe.

But

But I have received great hurt ; my nose and mouth bleed an alarming quantity, which has so weakened me, that I apprehend (in conjunction with a flow fever that hangs upon me) nothing less than a consumption will be the consequence. The worthy fellow who was so active in my deliverance, proves to be that valuable servant captain Briton once mentioned with peculiar regard. — Great, unspeakably great, are my obligations to him ; and I will strain a point, rather than he shall go unrewarded.

Sir Matthew has not shewn me the least tenderness, notwithstanding all I have suffered ; — however, as he is so gracious as to refrain from unkind reflections, and troubles me with but little of his company, I will be content.

I know not how to act with respect to the captain. Surely he will have so much discretion as to conceal the matter from his friend : — it would be very awkward for

for me to intimate any concern about it, as it would seem to imply an expectation I would not be supposed to entertain.— Yet I know the colonel to have so nice a sense of honour,—and I do believe his regard for me is such, that he would not forbear chastising the villain with his own hand, if Sir Matthew does suffer him to escape with too much lenity. But why do I encourage such unnecessary apprehensions?—Perhaps, before the news can reach him, I shall have paid that debt of nature, the demand of which has already struck my heart. Alas, my Nancy, I fear we shall never meet again!—Misfortunes, like vices, are progressive;—a greater and a greater have succeeded;—until this last has wound up the whole, and will inevitably crush me to atoms.

Preserve my letters, my sister, for the benefit of your posterity.—Let them read what I was;—let them read what I became;—and do you inform them of the termination.—Tell them that vice had no place

place in the catalogue of my transgressions, and yet that death alone could secure me from censure, or heal my peace.—Tell them how much I loved their valuable mother; how sensible I was of the justice, propriety, and necessity of her advice; but that vanity and self-sufficiency steeled my heart against it,—or I had escaped every misfortune.—And oh! do not let me at last die in vain;—but conjure them to reap the advantage I have procured them,—in teaching them to shun so fatal an example.



L E T T E R XXVIII.

Mrs. BATSON to Lady SANXSEY.

I Intreat my dear sister, notwithstanding her recent mortification, not to forego her worthy resolution, of bearing every calamity with firmness and resignation.

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Do not now leave the victory incomplete;—a well regulated corps receives repeated shocks undaunted; and it is that composure alone that can save them from becoming a prey to the enemy.—If they but once turn their backs;—if the order of their ranks is but once too much broken;—a precipitate, confused, and fatal retreat must be the consequence: and after having sustained the heat and fury of the battle, until the signal was already given for flying before their conquering arms, they in one unguarded moment suffer the palm to be snatched from their hands; and their lives and liberties become one horrid sacrifice.

My patience, I confess, in one respect is perfectly exhausted.—Your native air, and the soft soothing of friendship, would be highly salutary in your present circumstances.—Propose making us a speedy visit, to your haughty monarch; he must be incapable of opposing so reasonable an inclination;—or if he should, I myself will

will immediately come and fetch you, for you shall not be lost.

He either knows not your value, or his heart is most basely corrupt, to suffer you thus to wither in your bloom, unprotected and unpitied. Indeed, my good girl, your day of probation has been of long continuance, but depend upon it your reward is at hand. I have watched over your conduct with both a steady and anxious eye, and have had the happiness to find it, ever since you became a wife, such as I could have wished ; and one-and-twenty is but an early period, to have run the race of folly to an end.

My father, my husband, join with me in beseeching you not to disregard my request of coming to us. Our affection for you is increased by your increase of merit, and I once more repeat, that if it is possible to save you, you shall not be lost. As to your ambition of standing fair in the colonel's opinion, it is both natural

and laudable.—How Providence disposes every thing in your favour is strikingly evident from your accidental acquaintance with captain Briton.—Not one of your perfections are to be unknown; your prudence, your resignation, your delicacy, and your love of virtue, even for its own sake, are all happily evinced by your late conduct; and I think it is most adviseable, to leave the concealment or divulging of it intirely to the captain's own option:—he undoubtedly knows the man he has to deal with, and whilst he does justice to your reputation, must be incapable of wounding your repose.

I am greatly puzzled to divine what so good a kind of man can find in our strange unfeeling cousin Kitty, to attach him.—How will his friend ever be brought to approve such a choice?—Will it not occasion an infallible breach between them?

I could almost be tempted to wish, from downright malice, that he would change his

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his mind, and leave her in the lurch:—she deserves such treatment more than any young woman I am acquainted with. Keep up your spirits, my love, we must see her punished, mortified at least:—nor will she at the long run escape;—she has apparently a bad disposition. All your errors, by playing merely upon the surface, were soon brought to light, and have as soon dyed away; but her's will never perfectly be eradicated;—they are interwoven with her nature, they are commixed with her blood, and lie too deep ever to be exhausted.—Another and another will succeed;—yet another and another remain until the end of her life. Nor will that last scene, I am afraid, afford either more instruction to her acquaintance, or honour to herself, than those she has already passed. I am surprized my aunt can suffer her at so early an age, to be thus giddily mistress of her own inclinations, especially as she has not only an extensive knowledge of life, but human nature itself;—but, in short, that is her foible:—she is too

partial to see errors, she would be too tender to correct; therefore, to avoid giving pain to her own heart, or vexation to her child, she is content to remain in a passive half blind state, and leave her to her own inventions. I beg I may hear from you again very soon.—Make your proposal of visiting us with becoming courage;—do not be frowned into mean concessions:—the tyrant would tremble, if the coward dared but once to rebel. Shew him the difference between voluntary submission and undistinguishing implicit obedience, and let me soon embrace my long lost sister.



LETTER XXIX.

Miss HUTCHENS to Miss BINFIELD.

ANOTHER letter from mamma, replete with the dire summons of return, in return!—What can I do?—I am somewhat similarly circumstanced with
your

your heroines in romance;—and the question is, Shall I break mother's heart, or my own?—Why truly, between you and I, I have no ill design upon either;—but as I am sensible of the means of destroying or preserving the one, and can only guess at the effects my conduct would produce upon the other; you know it would not be politic to quit a certainty for an uncertainty. I am, however, miserably streightened;—turn to the right, the left, or follow my nose;—I protest I know not which to prefer:—love pulls one way, duty another.—I cannot long bear the severe conflict, but must yield to the most prevailing power.

Almighty Love, is it possible I should ever renounce thee?—and sober duty, how shall we break hands?—Yet, when were we so familiar?—Cramp my genius, my inclination within the narrow rules of duty? I ever scorned the thought;—and as I proved superior to every such poultry suggestion at fifteen, would it not be scan-

dalous to suffer myself to be overcome by it at twenty?

Mamma, if I do rebel, will deal me out a long, long lecture;—tell me “she has remained single ever since I was two years old, for my sake alone;—devoted all her wishes, all her attention to my welfare;—watched over me with the unwearied eye of parental tenderness; and suffered me to enjoy my unrestrained inclinations, except when they glaringly demanded restraint; and even then, she was far from stepping in with the authority of a parent, intreaties, not violent opposition being her resource upon such occasions, in order to convince my reason, and obtain her purpose by voluntary concession.” “So far good, mamma;—but have not I repeatedly professed myself obliged to you for your care and kindness?—and have I any other return in my power?—Did you not find a secret gratification in my infantine endearments?—and did you not rather love me for your’s, than my own sake?—Was

not

not my happiness an essential to your happiness? — for could you have enjoyed peace, if I had been afflicted with sickness or misfortune? — Did I not submit in general to your persuasions, even to the punishment of my own heart; — and thereby render the exertion of that authority you mention unnecessary? — and if my reason remained unconvinced, my compliance was yours.” — “So far good, daughter.” Well now, with respect to the single article of matrimony, which of us ought more immediately to be consulted? — It is not a point to be trifled with, or complimented out of one’s own hands, — as repentance would but succeed in vain; — and as I do know mamma so well, (she would easily be reconciled, my girl, when she found there was no remedy; — but would never be brought to bestow her sanction upon this chosen swain, without spending an age in enquiries respecting his disposition, character, fortune, connexions, [&c. &c.] she shall hear no more of me, until I have assumed the penitentials,

entials, by being converted into Mrs. Briton.

Besides, she still retains a high opinion of my dainty cousin's wisdom, and would infallibly consult her upon the occasion. — Revenge, I know from experience, is sweet; she would either set her face wholly against the match; or, what is exactly the same thing, throw out inuendos of its impropriety; and so, in order to please her, and compliment her judgment, I should be rendered miserable all my life long.

O, but we are to have a funeral! — Her ladyship is going fast, at least in imagination; though it is most apparent, that her lord and master, from the consequences of former irregularities, is in much the greater danger. The captain almost offended me last night. — I was advising him to embrace the opportunity her death would furnish him with, of displaying his wit; — “You shall compose a soft elegy,” said I, “and “I will set it to softer music.”

He appeared chagrin'd, actually sigh'd;
 —“ Poor lady ! alas, she deserves a better
 “ fate !” “ How, Sir,” cried I, “ I thought
 “ her ladyship possessed no larger a share
 “ of your approbation than mine ?” —
 “ True, madam,” resumed he, “ but ap-
 “ proaching death will awaken compas-
 “ sion in breasts that are not accustomed
 “ to feel it.”

A pretty rebuke truly ! but I passed it
 over unnoticed, or rather unresented.

How different her character and mine !
 She was so simple as to defeat her own pur-
 poses, by fluttering out of due season ; but I
 reserve my eclat until the gentleman is fairly
 noosed, — when I mean to appear in my own
 proper colours. I would pipe and whine in-
 deed ! and die of the pip, because spoufey
 would neglect me, or was incapable of kind-
 nefs ! No : I would run here, there, and
 every where in quest of dissipation. If my
 home was unpleasant, it should be no home
 for me. I would not sink beneath the weight,
 but

but rattle my chains aloud, until I brought some gallant knight to my assistance, who breaking them afunder, should lay both my own and his liberty at my feet.—I would smile encouragement up n him,—accept of his proffered services,—keep the brute in awe, by having my Cicisbeo (agreeable to the prevailing custom of Vienna, as described by a certain lady) to attend me wheresoever I was disposed to appear. A married woman, if she has but sufficient spirit to cast off the yoke of unjustifiable authority, has a thousand advantages unknown to a virgin-state.—A husband command! a husband govern! A very pretty story truly;—but let them, they would have my consent, provided they wisely chose a proper dominion:—their own violent tempers, and perverse narrow inclinations, would find them full employment. I will set you such an example of conjugal affection, and female power, that you shall bless yourself that you did not take the lead; and for want of proper capacity,
and

judgment, and so forth,—fall into fatal and irretrievable errors.

How I long to revisit the circles I was wont to frequent, under petticoat government, to give them a specimen of the wide distinction I make between a dependant and an independant state!—I will so teaze, so please, and so astonish a little multitude of butterflies, that but lately forsook me, to swell my lady's pride!—especially if she should live and suffer herself to be hauled with her pallid, death-like countenance amongst us;—for I believe I may without vanity pronounce, that her superiority respecting your humble servant, has attained a final period.

She is possessed of some very handsome jewels; her grand-mother's, I think (for as to her own mother, a more complete countrymope never existed). They were new-set when she was supposed to be upon the brink of such a match as would have effectually destroyed me, had it taken place.—Now,
if

if one was sure she had not above a month or so to live, and that her queer baronet would so far open his heart, as, by way of reward for the sacrifice of time I have made him, present one with them, it would be a kind of temptation to postpone one's intentions for that period.—But I fear it would not answer:—she is delicate in appearance, but tough in reality, and may creak on many a long year.—I will not therefore hazard the loss of a husband, for a precarious prospect of a diamond necklace:—so that, if she will not slip off in one poor week, she may live seven years for aught I care. The surgeon-fellow has undergone a discipline, that, if I am not greatly mistaken, he will be far from losing the remembrance of in a hurry, and has been suffered to depart.—His conduct, however, has given such offence, and his treatment so sunk him in the good opinion of his friends and patients, that it is thought, he will not be able to continue in the country, but must seek a settlement elsewhere.

Our

Our late harmony has been torn from us by his clumsy rough paw ;—my lady is invisible,—the knight surly,—the captain serious, and your friend I don't know howish.—What the muddy calm will produce is yet in embryo.



LETTER XXX.

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

WILL you not be surprised to hear, that John Jones, notwithstanding his several attachments to this part of the country, is about to remove,—having determined to fix his residence (accompanied by his loving wife, and much valued friend of the cottage) at Edinburgh, at least for some time. No great preparation is necessary ;— poor folks are easily transported from one quarter to another.—But how comes he to quit captain Briton's service ? Only in order to render himself more serviceable to him, as will be seen hereafter.

He

He has already given his wife due notice of his design; nor doubts her acquiescence, as she never yet attempted in one single instance to oppose his pleasure. The state of separation she has for some time experienced, must have been very painful to her.—Poor dear soul, how does she not long to behold my face?

You cannot conceive what a smart, sensible, good-natured thing it is;—she would throw herself away upon me, contrary to all her friends advice:—they thought proper in return to renounce her;—but I happily found means to reconcile them. She underwent much fatigue during her absence from England; but bore it with a magnanimity peculiar to herself;—nor shall she ever repent either her choice or conduct. If ever I should revisit Wiltshire, I will bring her in my hand;—and, in the mean time, bespeak your friendship and favourable consideration for her. I intend to take Sir Matthew's house in my way;—one parting look,—one farewell sigh,—
at

at least to the walls, is all I promise or dare trust myself with. If you should have much leisure, and some little curiosity to enquire into particulars, let me hear from you again by the return of the post:—delays will be dangerous; for perhaps this very John Jones may soon be taken off the great stage of action, and dwindle once more into an absolute nothing.



L E T T E R XXXI.

Mr. BROOKSBANK to Colonel DINGLEY.

UPON my honour, Charles, you trifle most intolerably with a heart that has ever beat with friendly anxiety respecting your affairs. I know not what construction to put upon your present frolic or phrensy:—you are rational and intelligent, except in the articles of your change of name and condition.—Why will you torture me with suspense?—why will you not reveal your whole design?—It cannot be

from want of confidence in me; and as to your playfulness, it is utterly inconsistent with the character of my friend. I have never before heard of a captain Briton, or at least that you had an acquaintance of that name; where can you have pick'd him up? and what can be your view in assuming the habit of a servant? You are a man of honour, or I should be alarmed at your proceedings, skulking about the country in disguise; and more especially a country that you ought, for your peace sake, above all others to shun.—Putting your friend upon making love to a woman you despise, and now sleering off for Scotland at an hour's notice, are circumstances so mysterious, that I am unable to unravel them.

Believe me, Charles, the wisest step you could take is to fly to me;—there is danger in your present situation no less to lady Sanxsey than yourself:—you have been happily serviceable to her;—let that content you, and do not ruin with one hand, what you have accomplished with the other.

other. I will not much longer keep your (perhaps unwarrantable) secret.—How do I know but I may be indirectly carrying on some horrid plot,—and, as an accessory, be brought in for a share of the punishment?—If you do not explain yourself, by some early opportunity, to my entire satisfaction, I am determined to apply to a magistrate, —lay the whole business before him, and having obtained due authority, apprehend you for a vagrant. As for your Dulcinea, she may stroll at large;—I know her not, —nor will I concern myself about her;—some camp-trull I suppose at best:—but for you, depend upon it, I will blow up all your schemes, and oblige you to produce my friend colonel Dingley upon the spot. What have I to do with your John Jones's, Matts of the cottage, or foppish captain Britons?—They have amongst them, I fear, murdered the man I love; but I will call them to a most severe account.

To be serious: Your letters are such a mixture of the comic and tragic, that I

know not whether to laugh or cry at them.

If these declarations do not bring you to reason, violent methods must.—Can you not conceive the satisfaction you deprive me of, by thus unkindly absenting yourself, if not from my knowlege, at least from my society?—Nor can it be possible to make me an adequate return. My forbearance has been hardly constrained. I would have chid you weeks ago for your cruelty, had I not flattered myself some innocent conspiracy was maturing against fine miss Hutchens.—I own I could not even have wish'd to prevent your humbling her by every justifiable means;—I would have her smart in her vanity, and pretensions to superiority, where so few can be superior; but her person, fortune, and reputation ought to be sacred. Let me receive an immediate answer from colonel Dingley, a categorical answer to the following interrogatories.

Is he, or is he not still my friend? Is my peace and happiness still of any consequence

to him?—Does he mean to persist in entertaining me with only whipt syllabubs, when my constitution evidently requires more substantial food? Let him answer these queries in the first place, and perhaps I may extend my demand to the solution of many others remaining in the breast of his highly tantalized friend.



L E T T E R XXXII.

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

WHY, my good, honest, testy Ned,
—what a bustle dost thou make about the most innocent, the most trifling affair in nature?—Must I repeat all that I have already said?—As how that colonel Dingley is no longer colonel Dingley, and that John Jones is literally John Jones, and much at your service.—What a deal of unnecessary trouble could you now find in your heart to give a poor, harmless fellow, who is your entire well-wisher. But,

for your comfort, the farce is almost ripe for exhibition,—and you shall be permitted to shove in your miserable long lean face, for your entertainment and satisfaction, the author's night;—but sooner I cannot promise. I feel unusual pleasure at the near approach of my wishes; but what will become of me, when they are accomplished?—I cannot live without employment;—my disease is diverted, nay almost suspended, amidst busy scenes; but on my return to idleness, would return upon me with double vigour. You surely can strike out some little office for me;—a whipper in, for example, an assistant in the stable, or at worst recommend me in your neighbourhood as an able hand at taming a shrew. I will not trust myself to be serious: you know not how much depends upon my supporting my present character with proper dignity,—or you would never attempt to make me relinquish it. Do not write to me in a rational strain, until I set you the example;—the ball, alas! will drop too soon, I fear, for my repose.

Miss

Miss Kitty has consented to favour captain Briton with her hand;—and he, I hope, is too much the man of honour to treat her unworthily.

My wife arrived last night in order to accompany me.—I told you how impatient she would be to return to my arms, after having once made her peace with her relations. She approves my scheme in the highest degree, and is now anticipating her future happiness.

The fair sex are abundantly more prompt to take felicity upon credit, than us heavy phlegmatic mortals.—Their imaginations are both strong and lively:—uncloyed with business, unincumbered by reflection, on they go. The prospect is delightful and extensive; they enjoy it to the utmost.—A cloud suddenly arises.—No matter: it will never reach them in their present situation.—They do, however, get well soufed;—whimper a little, shake their ears;—but the next hour as fondly em-

brace some new infatuation.—Whilst we, weighing ways and means,—circumstances and events,—probabilities, possibilities, and their contraries,—neither taste the past, present, or future, in an adequate degree. Wisdom, my friend, is but a troublesome companion in this path of life.—How many evils does it not unnecessarily make us attentive to? how many dangers does it not alarm us with?—how many deaths does it not occasion us to die? Without it our sight is happily contracted:—we feel the calamity only when it reaches us—(and who can deny but that the evil in expectation, generally exceeds the reality); we lose it the instant it is surmounted;—and again look forward with joyful, and unapprehensive hearts.

Take my advice, Ned.—You are disposed to change your condition;—prepare the collar,—slip your neck without hesitation fairly into it;—it is time enough to complain, when it becomes uneasy:—
but

but if you once fancy that you can separate the convenience from some little inconveniences, good bye to you, your fate is determined. Perhaps this is the last rambling letter you may receive, though not the least pleasing; for when I fall again, I never more shall rise.

Ah, woe is me that have a wife!—What an impediment to my advancement!—Sir Matthew's old toothless housekeeper was inclined to behold me with an eye of approbation. She has feathered her nest pretty handsomely;—an endless wardrobe;—many valuable pieces of furniture;—two hundred pounds judiciously tyed up in the foot of a worn-out stocking;—besides India bonds to a very considerable amount:—but as it is impossible for me to give myself a legal claim to all this treasure, I must endeavour to content myself without it.

Nor, indeed, to confess a truth, would I forego the possession of my tender, my
sensible

sensible Fanny for all she can, or may be able to bestow.—My Fanny! who is the softest, the most endearing companion;—the most indulgent, most compassionate of friends; and the most grateful and obliging of wives, that ever fell to wicked mortal's lot.—Nay, she is abundantly too good for me;—nor can I make her amends for all she has done and suffered for my sake. She preserved my life by her care and assiduity;—she revived my spirits by her vivacity;—and if my scheme should be productive of the expected satisfaction,—it is to her alone that I am indebted for it.—Do not, therefore, I conjure you, despise her humble birth, or obscure destiny;—let the goodness of her heart obtain favour in your sight;—you will never repent aught you may determine for her advantage. I could expatiate whole hours upon her perfections,—yet leave the theme unexhausted:—she is a pattern for wives;—a treasure to her husband; and from being possessed of that inestimable gem, contentment, is herself as happy, as she renders

ders all those who have connexion with her.—But I suppose you are heartily weary of my unintelligible jargon;—yet rest assured, that I have a recompence in store for all your sufferings.



LETTER XXXIII.

MISS HUTCHENS to MISS BINFIELD.

EDINBURGH.

WELL, my dear, I have at last struck my threatened bold stroke for a husband, as you will find by the date of my letter ; but such a husband is worth procuring on any terms. His servant was dispatched last week, in order to settle himself in some decent habitation for our reception, an inn being a preposterous place, in the captain's opinion, to convey a lady to. We have laughed all the way at the thoughts of the heavy bustle our flight will occasion both in town and country.

try. My lady, notwithstanding she was pleased to take the same route some six months ago, with a person no more to be compared to captain Briton *than I to Hercules*, will, I doubt not, be very liberal of her censures. It will prove a cordial to her drooping spirits; dispel those vapours that have for some time overwhelmed her;—and in fine, restore her to new life and vigour. Nothing can be more engaging than the captain's behaviour, or more entertaining than his conversation. He was acquainted with every town through which we passed;—pointed out every prospect worthy observation; and told me every gentleman's feat, with little agreeable anecdotes relative to the families, the flying carriage gave us a transient view of. Commend me to your sober timid lasses, who never have the courage to leave mamma's apron-string;—who accept a clumsy ancient batchelor of her providing, without either offering the slightest objection,—or even wishing so to do;—who submit to be led to church, passive, easy victims, in
the

face of an odious congregation ;—and exchange her roof for that of their newly elected, or rather constituted, tyrants, as a matter merely of common accident and necessity.

As for my own part, I now declare, in the prettiest, snuggest, neatest of apartments, that if it was possible for me to be removed by enchantment into my mother's house ;—and I was convinced that she would not only approve and promote the match I have now travelled so many miles to bring to a conclusion,—but that she would honour the ceremony with her presence, and smirk, as mothers are wont to do on such occasions ;—I should a thousand times prefer the plan I have pursued ;—expose myself to some few frowns, a very insupportable lecture, and all that disagreeable round-about I apprehend I shall be obliged to take, before I shall be able to establish myself once more in her good graces ;—and should even think the pleasant journey I have enjoyed
most

most cheaply purchased, with even the additional severe penance my very good friend lady Sanxsey may persuade her to inflict.

To-morrow morning the blessed knot is to be tied.—How differently do different optics represent one and the same object!—Some girls flounce and flutter themselves with the notion of forfeiting their liberty, and foregoing all the pleasures of their lives.—I confess that seems to have been the original intention of the solemnity;—but if we had not innumerable instances of a contrary consequence, matrimony would have but few votaries, especially at my age. What at twenty, like the ridiculous Jewesses, carry a badge of my slavery about me, and still lick my lips at scenes I am far from having lost my relish for, from idly supposing them inconsistent with the dignity of my matronly character! But I have already explained myself sufficiently upon this subject. I desire you will be prepared for company—

companying us in our London journey ; I positively will not appear without you ; — and if you are not consenting to your own happiness, — my hero shall carry you off by violent methods ; — and I will undertake to reconcile you to your fate.



Afternoon.

The good father who is to perform the ceremony, and a friend of his procuring to act the bestowing part (vulgarly called giving one away), have been introduced to me. How little does my easy undivining mother conceive the situation her daughter is now in, or the business that engages her ! — On my word, if it was not for the utter impossibility of the thing, I should have her slap upon me at the most unfavourable of junctures, and my whole scheme disconcerted in a twink.

L E T -



LETTER XXXIV.

Lady SANXSEY to Mrs. BATSON.

STRANGE news, my dear sifter ! The worthy appearing captain Briton has descended to so mean, so scandalous an action, as carrying off a raw unthinking girl, who, regardless of the consequence, has consulted no other monitor than her vanity, and is captivated by no other charm than a gay outside.

I am both mortified and astonished at being made the dupe of his artifice.—How did he impose upon my easy credulity,—engage my approbation and good opinion, by a conduct so uniform and unexceptionable, that I considered him as abundantly too good for the creature he has made choice of !—But to steal away in so ungentleel, so ungentleman-like a manner,—and

and never having revealed either his circumstances or intentions, — bespeak him of a very different composition to what I imagined.

There must, my Nancy, be some defect in his fortune, or deception in his practices, — or he would never have entered a family in the disadvantageous, the despicable light of a run-away and seducer; for such I am persuaded my poor aunt will consider him. I every day was expecting proper proposals to be made by him, or I should not have suffered matters to proceed the visible length they even had done.

I am grieved to think, how the fond mother's heart will be wounded by this premeditated act of disobedience; — nor can I give her other consolation than assuring her, that his behaviour was the behaviour of a gentleman, — his conversation agreeable to every tenor of propriety and honour. — But this will little avail

her, when so recent an instance of his deviation from every favourable appearance,—contradicts what he would have intimated were his real principles.

I know not how to conduct myself upon this occasion. — Confessing the hint he once gave me respecting the colonel, can be of no service to either the afflicted mother or misjudging daughter, and might too probably draw ungenerous reflections upon me.

The world we know is malicious, and has so fruitful an invention, that I should not be surprized (on such a circumstance's transpiring) if it was to charge me with being accessary to the whole scheme, if not the sole concerter of it;—with encouraging the captain to visit at our house;—teaching him to recommend himself to Sir Matthew, in order to secure his footing;—and by displaying the charms of Miss Kitty's handsome fortune, inciting him to the bold step he has so successfully carried into execution.

MISS PITTBOROUGH. 2

I am so weak and low, that I will not answer for the consequences of an additional shock ; but if you think it necessary I should expose myself to it, I will gladly run all hazards. My faculties are really so impaired, I dare not rely upon my own judgment in any case ;—therefore shall come to no absolute determination, until I receive your friendly and judicious advice. Sir Matthew, by his invitation of her to his house, has rendered himself in some measure answerable for every evil that may befall her ;—nor am I sorry that he should bear the burthen.

As to your very kind, your very agreeable request of seeing me at your village, I own it grieves me that I cannot comply with it ; but I will give you my objections, and exculpate myself from every undue charge by anticipation. In the first place, then, I have reason to believe that I am so much reduced in my strength and spirits, as to be unequal to the journey ;—and as to obtaining Sir Matthew's consent, I am

convinced I could as easily level mountains, and restrain the impetuous waves. I would not be uncharitable, but the man who could for so long a time behold the visible decay that has overspread my countenance unmoved,—must be incapable of giving into any proposition merely to prevent its fatal continuance.

Be content, my sister;—peace and this world are irreconcilable:—I fall a martyr to my own indiscretion;—but what my bloom and years have lost, I hope my mental part has gained.—I have made the best preparation I am able, as I can perceive no possibility of avoiding the blow, to support it with due resignation.

But I have a stronger motive to detain me, than either of the foregoing.

Sir Matthew has so heated and fretted himself for some time past, that he has thrown his whole mass of blood into a ferment.—His head and stomach have been more than once severely attacked, though
for

a short period ; and unless the disorder can be brought into the extreme parts, and terminate in a good sharp fit of his gouty distemper, the odds are greatly in his disfavour ;—and notwithstanding I seem to be in almost the last stage of my existence, I may yet survive his dissolution. I have hitherto supported my character of a wife, with all the decency and propriety my unhappy circumstances would admit.—I certainly injured him, in making him only a tool of my resentment, and have much to be forgiven. The prospect of death may occasion a change in his sentiments ;—and if we can mutually pardon, and mutually assist each other,—in this most trying, this most important of exigencies ;—we may, perhaps, in great measure atone for our mutual transgressions:

I believe Sir Matthew has been very faulty in the beginning of his life.—May all his errors not only be recollected, but expiated ! But so far however from pro-

moting this necessary work, by yielding to selfish considerations, and absenting myself at this juncture, I should drive him to all those passionate extremes a weak mind and suffering body are so liable to fall into. I know the goodness of your heart too well, to apprehend you will either disapprove or attempt to shake my resolution, — especially as you may rest assured of this melancholy truth, that it is beyond the power of medicine, or the most friendly assiduity, to restore me. — I am a mere walking ghost, and actually totter on the verge of eternity.

Adieu, my best beloved, my most valuable of sisters. — Our separation will be only momentary ; — when you have *fought your good fight, and finished your course*, — we shall again be re-united for ever and ever. Do not let the dropping off of so miserable a weed affect you beyond measure : the fault was in the soil ; — but by being transplanted, its rancour will be lost, and it will then shoot up to full perfection.



LETTER XXXIV,

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

EDINBURGH.

A GREEABLE to my promise, I am now set down to unravel that mystery that has so long perplexed you,—every circumstance of which has concurred to my entire satisfaction; and you may judge of my present rapture, by the continual hints I have thrown out respecting the importance of my success.

I arrived in this town, in the character of John Jones, on Tuesday last, accompanied by my loving spouse and honest Matt, whom I before informed you were marked down for my fellow-travellers. We found but little difficulty in obtaining a tolerable habitation; and with great diligence, began to prepare ourselves for our master's arrival.

He was a day later than we expected: however, the smoking horses, and enflamed complexion of his lady, bespoke their expedition. Never did I think that Kitty's eyes were capable of such agreeable vivacity,—as the only sparkle I had ever seen them adorned with, was what malicious pleasure communicated. She passed the chief part of that afternoon in writing.—The captain did me the honour to make me his companion over a bottle, and a chearful one it was; nor did we either dishonestly or churlishly exclude my worthy Fanny from her just participation.

The evening arrived:—pleasure still danced in her countenance;—she was superior to all your little squeamish fancies assumed upon these occasions:—fancies, that, notwithstanding their folly, are not without their beauty;—and retired to rest with heart-felt satisfaction. The clergyman had paid his compliments to the lady, and engaged to have a friend of his ready in due time in the morning, to assist at the appointed ceremony.

At

At length the morn arrived, and
Heavily in clouds brought on the day.

Breakfast waited some time: no parson made his appearance. The captain storn'd, —the lady intreated him to be composed. Delays in their circumstances were by no means dangerous:—it was impossible they should be pursued,—and she was an utter stranger in that part of the world;—therefore it would be agreeable to her to take a little walk, and perhaps the gentleman might be ready by their return.—The captain acquiesced, on condition that he was first permitted to enquire into the cause of his disappointment. —“Some indispensable
“business had called him abroad, but he
“had left word he would attend them in a
“couple of hours.” Miss Kitty’s countenance rather lowered;—the captain once more began to fly out; whilst poor John Jones retired in sullen dissatisfaction to his apartment, from whence he never more returned. You, Ned, are perfectly unacquainted with Edinburgh,—its situation,—&c. I
need

need therefore only tell you, that the captain and his elected bride, having strolled, by way of amusement, over the greatest part of the town;—were most unfortunately met in their return, on the most populous spot, by your friend colonel Dingley, who started, stared, and for some moments remained incapable of saluting them in a proper manner.

Miss Hutchens, from an opinion of her security, was far from being disconcerted at the encounter;—but tossing up her head with a contemptuous and self-sufficient air, pulled her captain by the sleeve, and desired him “not to take any notice of that fellow’s insolence;” (the colonel obstructed their passage, and rudely enough attempted to seize her hand) “I will give you his history,” added she, “at a proper season, and account for this extraordinary ill-breeding!”

“Hold, miss Hutchens,” cried the colonel, preventing her slipping by him, as

was

was evidently her intention; “you may
 “ spare yourself a relation that would be
 “ neither new nor entertaining to that
 “ gentleman.” Then turning to Briton,
 he jocosely accosted him with, “What,
 “ Tom, are you ashamed of your old ac-
 “ quaintance?—I remain the same man
 “ you ever knew me; but I own, it was
 “ not without much difficulty that I dis-
 “ covered the drummer thro’ this fine dis-
 “ guise.—What business can have brought
 “ you here? Do you know that lady?
 “ Are you not a finished rascal, to be im-
 “ posing yourself, as it is plain you have
 “ done, upon her easy credulity for a per-
 “ son of consequence?—Was it for this
 “ you solicited your discharge?—and
 “ made free—But no matter, your life is
 “ as much in my power as desertion
 “ would have rendered it; but”—

A numerous crowd had assembled during this harangue.—The captain fell upon his knees, and, in the most servile terms, intreated pardon and mercy, mercy and
 par-

pardon ; acknowledging in the face of the whole mob, that he was the most hardened of sinners : for that he was already married to an honest, sober woman, who loved him to distraction. The mob, enraged by this confession, having learned his business at Edinburgh from the delighted Matt's officious communicativeness, were for treating him very roughly ; but the colonel humanely prevented their intention, by beckoning his servant, who he perceived on tip-toe at some little distance, a happy spectator of the whole scene, and delivering him to his care until further orders ; who, with the assistance of two fellows he had some little knowledge of, conveyed him safely to the colonel's inn, though not without a rude salute or two from the attending rabble, who with loud huzzas and hissings accompanied him to the very entrance.

The story was in every body's mouth ;
—“ How that miss Kitty Hutchens, a
“ young lady of great fortune, had narrow-
“ ly

“ly escaped marrying a drummer,” with every possible aggravation; “and all by the “accidental interposition of one colonel “Dingley.” The mortification and confusion of Kitty’s aspect is unspeakable:—the colonel was apprehensive, lest the violence of her passions might have some bad effect, unless timely discharged;—he therefore addressed her in a sneering kind of accent, and offered her his protection, until she could conveniently return to London. “Take me,” said she, “take me but out of “this mob; I have nothing further to ask.” —He tucked her arm under his, (as she apparently stood in need of support) and conducting her in such a manner as to gratify the spectators with a view of her person, lodged her safe in a house of reputation; when ordering coffee, he most provokingly congratulated her upon her happy deliverance. It answered the desired purpose.—Oh, how she stamped and raved, and played the heroine!—laying it thick upon your friend for the part he had acted. —“To expose her!—make her a town’s
“talk!

“ talk !—furnish a paragraph for the public papers !—and render it impossible for her ever to shew her face again, was the height of malice and cruelty ;—but she supposed he took a pleasure in beholding her distress, the most cutting part of which was, the owing an obligation to such a” —she look’d the rest, and a most infernal look it was. He begged her to be composed ;—told her, “ he had so great a regard for her mother, that he rejoiced in the service he had done her, notwithstanding she was so offended at it ;—and if she would honour him with any commands to that worthy lady, they should be faithfully executed,—as he was going to write to her that very moment.”

Here her proud tears burst forth again. — “ What a representation he would make of the affair !—She could not expect him to conceal, —she could not expect him to extenuate a single circumstance ;—she was undone ;— and neither time nor chance could restore her peace. But however,” a
diabo-

diabolical pleasure informing her every feature, "she had one consolation even beyond his power;—Lady Sanxsey, the woman on earth from whose knowledge she should be most anxious to keep an affair of that sort, was in no condition to exult;—nor did she believe she could live till the news reached her."

This stab went deep.—The triumph for some minutes was wholly her's;—but the pleasing hope immediately suggested itself, that she had only mentioned that cruel circumstance,—in order to wring his heart in return for the mortification he had occasioned her. You may guess the effect it, however, produced on the colonel's mind. With respect to herself, he even wished it was possible to aggravate every pang she endured, and punish her with a repetition of the late scene;—but was obliged to content himself with only writing to her mother in much more unfavourable terms than he otherwise would have done;—and inclosing a paragraph to the printers of six different

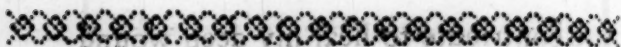
different news-papers to be inserted immediately.

Thus by the fly, artful, and indefatigable industry of poor John Jones, has the proudest, vainest, and most unworthy heart that ever woman possessed, been most palpably humbled ; for every circumstance in appearance merely accidental,—as the parson's failing his appointment, &c. &c. was all the effect of his well-timed policy ; and as the joy of her having escaped so fatal a snare will be a compensation, in the fond mother's opinion, for the disgrace and disappointment of young madam ; the fellow is so hardened as to believe he shall never repent his frolic. The secret is in so good hands, that it is in no danger of transpiring ; and the laugh will be miserably against the unhappy Kitty.

All her severity respecting her amiable cousin, must infallibly be recollected upon this occasion ; which will tend to the aggravation of her own proceedings: nor
can

can she ever again dare to decry the errors of her sex, who had herself so egregiously erred?—What! consent to go off with a man upon a two months acquaintance only! his family, his connexions, his fortune unknown!—What inexcusable indiseretion,—and abominable absurdity!—especially as the event so glaringly evinces the blameableness of her choice:—for it must be acknowledged, that such is the candour of the public, that, however unworthy the cause, if the effect is but advantageous, it looks no further, or at worst is easily appeased.

And now, Ned, if you please I will introduce Tom Briton to your acquaintance, in his own proper person.—But as I have already swelled this letter to an enormous length, I will dispatch it for your perusal; nor shall you long wait for the hero's history.



LETTER XXXV.

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

COME, my friend, we will soufe into the tale, without either preface or introduction.

On my arrival at Portsmouth, in order for my embarkation, in the same house where I was accustomed (and on this occasion lodged) lodged also this worthy young man. His aspect was clouded with dejection, — his mind visibly disturbed, and his fortune, from some hints my landlady had obtained, to the last degree desperate.

An air of gentility in his person, and engaging candour of his countenance, inclined me to wish for some conversation with him. — “He is unfortunate,” said I, “consequently compassionate; and by finding a comforter himself, may be taught to assume that character, and in some measure
“sure

“ sure contribute to heal my deep wound-
“ ed bosom.”

I in vain, for several days, fought an opportunity of casting myself in his way without abruptness; his modest reserve and honest shame, inciting him to fly an, however, kind pursuer.

I mentioned my ill success to my landlady; who having conceived a high opinion of her guest, and at all times desirous of obliging me, very readily undertook to bring us together.

The first interview was mutually painful; a diffidence on his part, and a fear of oppressing the unfortunate on mine, laid us under great constraint.

We repeated the same scene again and again; until I by a frank communication of my own circumstances, brought him to disclose the nature of his.

He was, I found, so unhappy as to lose a good father in his twelfth year;—his

mother naturally gay, and only then in the prime of her life, looked out immediately for a second partner. Nor was she long unsuccessful:—a fellow of great volubility, and some small skill in physic, paid his addresses, and soon became master of her person and fortune.

Her first husband, a mercer, was so infatuated as to leave her a discretionary power respecting all his affairs; as likewise of the education and disposition of this his only son. She, with the same generosity, made no terms with his successor; but became, with her child and fortune, entirely at his mercy. The man was, however, far from ill-natured, though prodigal and foppish: he instantly parted with the honest stock in trade,—set up his equipage,—and was dubbed physician. He continued the boy at school until he attained his sixteenth year, and then removed him with great éclat to the university. Tom (for that is honestly one of his names) concluding from his father's manner of living,

living, and the almost extravagant supplies he received, that his fortune was considerable, did not scruple to indulge a youthful inclination. His studies, indeed, were not neglected, as they proved his delight; he purchased a handsome library, drest with elegance, gave pretty entertainments to his brother students, and was well received by every female within ten miles round. The vacations were spent in London; at one of which periods his father kindly intimated, “that he did not require him to
 “apply himself to any particular branch of
 “literature, as he was far from intending
 “to clog so promising a genius with the
 “trammels of business; but when he was
 “sufficiently qualified, would purchase a
 “genteel employment for him under the
 “government, that should not fall short of
 “his most flattering expectations.” Thus entirely released from every doubt or apprehension respecting his future provision, and naturally gay, facetious, and entertaining, he devoted a larger share of his time to pleasure, than he had ever before

ventured to do ; nevertheless always keeping to the windward of extravagance ; or in other words, regulating his expences by his remittances. In this round of dissipation, love, however, paid a visit to his heart : — the lady unexceptionable ; — the relations of each party upon amicable terms. He made no secret of his prepossession in her favour, and was encouraged to hope she would one day be his ; her father only prudently promising, that he would see what Mr. Blake would do for him, before he consented to the matter being carried further than friendly visits : — which visits were little less than spending their whole time together, and could not fail of increasing their mutual approbation. Thus smoothly did they glide on for four successive years ; when Tom having attained the period of three-and-twenty, began to press his father for the promised establishment ; who with an agreeable smile assuring him, every thing should be settled to his entire satisfaction within the ensuing six months, rendered our lover completely happy.

The coxcomb had ever affected to boast of his great interest with persons in power. — My lord-duke was spoke to upon the occasion, and no doubt remained, but that Tom was born to be a great man. His mistress's father, delighted with the prospect of his daughter's shining at court, redoubled his caresses of the young fellow, voluntarily telling him, "That the day
 " that put him in possession of such a
 " place as would suit his purpose, should
 " put him likewise in possession of three
 " thousand pounds, and his Fanny's
 " hand." What could be more flattering than his prospects! — My lord-duke pushed with great vigour, — every hour was expected to bring welcome tidings; — and in order to be prepared to keep his word, the old fellow had Miss Fanny's cloaths made, and held in readiness. But, alas! that day of happiness had never been enrolled in the book of Fate; — for, on returning one evening from visiting the young lady, and anticipating in idea the felicity that awaited him, he found a furly

fellow seated in his father's hall, who roughly demanded his business.

Provoked by his insolence, yet disdain-
ing to answer him, he would have rushed
into the parlour;—when an ugly salute
from the gruff messenger's club felled him
to the ground, from whence he was raised
only to learn the story of his ruined for-
tune, and sink again beneath that more
powerful blow.

The case was, that execution upon ex-
ecution was out against his father, who
had thought proper to abscond that very
afternoon with his wife lady, without giv-
ing him the slightest intelligence;—carry-
ing off every thing of value they could
lay their hands on.

The kind of night he passed is much
easier to be conceived, than described.—
He repaired early the next morning to
the house of his mistress, in order merely
to acquaint her with the cruel change he
had

had experienced, and take a last farewell ; for he was too sensible of her father's turn of mind, to flatter himself, that any circumstance could compensate the loss of fortune, in his sight. But the task of revealing his unhappy fate was not reserved for him ;—the news had flown swifter than love ; and those very doors that were wont to open almost spontaneously at his approach, were now as strongly barricaded against him, as if he had been a robber.

As he well knew the narrow soul he had to deal with, this shock was by no means so severe as might have been expected ;—but to lose sight for ever of his beloved Fanny, the object of his tenderest affection, was not so easily borne :—he, however, resolved, upon some little recollection, never again to expose himself to so gross an indignity, but to shun the face of every former acquaintance. He wrote to Oxford to his tutor, begging him to dispose of his books, furniture, and apartments to the best advantage ; and after
discharging

discharging a few little bills, remit him the overplus immediately. This business was soon performed, though not at all to his satisfaction, as he had promised himself a much larger supply than he found he was intitled to :—for ignorant as he was of every method of procuring a livelihood, and entirely friendless, he found his whole possessions did not exceed two hundred and seventy pounds.

He took himself a little lodging, where despair was his only companion ;—nor had he sufficient strength of mind to fix upon one scheme of future provision. As he was musing late one evening in his chamber, with distraction, horror, nay, guilt in his heart,—for it had occurred to him, that his life was of no consequence to any one ;—that he had a hand to execute, —and was entirely in his own power ;—when the maid of the house, gently tapping at his door, delivered him a letter. The hand was not unknown to him ; he broke the seal, trembling with a variety of
of

of passions, and to his unspeakable astonishment, read that his Fanny waited in the parlour, until that note had prepared him to give her a welcome reception.

Half frantic with joy, he was flying to receive her;—but was prevented by a female figure that stood without the door, and in a low voice intreated him not to betray himself. —“I can guess your feelings,” said she, “by my own;—but our prudence
“is all we have at present to rely upon.”

They then sat down to consult what step was most eligible, under their critical circumstances. She informed him, “That
“one of her father’s servants having by
“accident seen him in the street, and out
“of mere curiosity traced him to his
“lodging, had mentioned the circumstance only that very day in confidence
“to the upper-maid, who kindly revealed
“it to her, though far from suspecting the
“consequence it was of to her, or the
“effect it produced.—She said, she had
“long

“ long been clear in her resolution of
“ sharing his fortune, if she ever was so
“ happy as to learn the place of his re-
“ treat; that she had brought away in
“ money and effects about three hundred
“ pounds, which she considered as no less
“ his property than herself;—that their
“ engagement was not of such a nature
“ as to be dissolved either by misfortune,
“ or the prudential views of a father,
“ who had no one reasonable objection
“ to offer; concluding with begging he
“ would think of leaving England with
“ all possible expedition.”

Poor Tom was so struck by this proof of her attachment, and so greatly affected by some reflections upon the misery he should reduce her to, by availing himself of her partiality and generosity, that he was unable to reply. She, who possesses an uncommon share of vivacity and good-nature, rallied him upon his gloomy reception of an offer, that she expected would have procured her many fine compliments;
— when,

—when, recollecting himself, and being abundantly convinced that she could not return again to a roof she had abandoned ; and from some other convictions, the propriety of which he had not leisure to consider, he at length yielded to the tide of joy that he had been labouring to stem, and all his soul was gratitude and love. She had given herself for his sister to the people of the house, and as such was treated with great civility, during some part of the next day, in which time he prepared a proper place to convey her to, but judged it best to remain himself in his old lodging, to prevent suspicion.

He enquired at the Jamaica coffee-house for a passage in the first ship destined for that island, and by the expiration of that necessary period (or rather, what the new and extraordinary laws of this country require, previous to the performance of the marriage ceremony), met with one to his wish : and the third day after that event had taken place, embarked

barked in high spirits with his lovely wife, at Gravesend ; mutually flattering themselves, that they should leave every misfortune behind them.

But unhappily there was another difficulty in store for them, which they but little apprehended ;—they were wrecked a few leagues beyond the Nore, and with the utmost hazard escaped with their lives, and the little money they had in their pockets ; their danger having been so extreme, that no one thought of any thing but personal preservation. Unknowing what to do in this exigence, and meeting with a conveyance, they had come to Portsmouth, from whence Tom proposed working his passage to some of the new colonies,—and there establishing himself in the best manner Providence should enable him. He had applied by the name of Brown to some persons in London, whom he knew were acquainted with the necessary steps, and was waiting their answer with a great degree of impatience, when I became acquainted

quainted with him, from the double apprehensions of his unprotected situation's exposing him to being pressed on board a man of war (a circumstance his wife declared she could never survive), and the certainty that they were exhausting their little fund, without the least degree of probability of obtaining a fresh supply;—but as they conceived a decent appearance would be their best security, however cutting their reflections, they had persisted to support it, except some intimations, which in the anguish of his heart Tom had let fall, and had not escaped the observation of his landlady.

Such is the history of Tom Bristow, alias Brown, alias Briton; you cannot, therefore, be surprized to hear he found a tolerable friend in me.—I easily persuaded him to become a volunteer, as I promised to support him with my friendship and interest.

Content

Content soon bid the roses resume their former seat, and never was there a more pleasing or agreeable companion than the reanimated Fanny.—Her vivacity has frequently beguiled my misfortunes, and the scheme I have so recently carried into execution, was intirely of her planning. To heighten the ridicule, Tom inlifted himself, on a vacancy happening, as drummer; which office he occupied one whole month before our return to England, when I civilly presented him with his discharge, having by the interest of a friend of mine in Ireland (to whom I related the story of his misfortunes) obtained him a very genteel post in the Irish Customs, to which country he is now repairing with all possible expedition. Fanny's father, overcome by my intercessions (or rather by the all-prevailing appointment his son-in-law had procured) consented to receive a visit from his child (my reputed wife). He returned her with his blessing, and five hundred pounds in her pocket, promising

promising from thenceforward to consider her, as her husband should continue to deserve.

You must and shall see them before they quit England, and to them I refer you for a more minute account of our plot : and I am certain you will acknowledge a more amiable couple cannot exist.

He was formed by nature for the commission I intrusted him with, as he was not only master of every necessary qualification, but loved a frolic at his heart. — Had we by any perverse accident failed in our design, and detection, instead of success, been the fruits of our labour ; it would have been evident that no real evil could be intended the adorable Miss Kitty, as her lover was not only predisposed of, his wife attending on his every step, but most unquestionably in all his former conduct, a man of true and nice honour. But as her whole punishment will depend upon the affair being kept a secret ;—I reflect with pleasure, that no one has been in the

smallest respect intrusted, but those who can be relied upon.

To this couple I owe every satisfaction I have so unexpectedly tasted; they have proved the indirect means of preserving me from the most dire destruction, in the person of my Miss Pittborough; you will not, therefore, deny them the next place to her and you in my friendship and affection. I must add, that, notwithstanding I had not the least reason, to doubt the young man's veracity, I so far acted the suspicious part as to write to his tutor, and some persons in London, to enquire his family and character. From them I received many lights into his real merit, his modesty was far from communicating, as never mortal was more extolled for every valuable endowment, or more compassionated under misfortunes.

I hope, Ned, I have now made ample amends for all former trifling;—and proved myself both a rational, honest man, and your sincere friend.

LET-



LETTER XXXVI.

From the same.

I Have received a letter of thanks from Mrs. Hutchens, for my care of her daughter.—She looks (according to my prediction) rather to the greatness of her deliverance, than the greatness of her indiscretion, and has dispatched her woman to convey her safe once more to her maternal arms. Another happy point gained! for I could not have exulted, if her peace had been destroyed. She informs me, that Sir Matthew's health is in a declining state.—I am a man, Ned, not an angel;—but as pleasure's cup is ever dashed with care, so this piece of intelligence is accompanied with most alarming accounts of Miss Pittborough's decay!—She is, alas, supposed to be far gone in a consumption.

The wings of my vivacity are totally clipped.—I cannot bear the thought; and if I lose her a second time, no means on earth can save me from distraction. I have ventured to write her a long letter, in hopes to amuse her,—exculpating the late captain Briton from all blame;—have described my motives for putting him upon acting the character in which she knew him,—and Kitty's mortifications, in the most lively colours;—acknowledged myself to be the very John Jones, for whom she expressed so much kindness and approbation;—presented my best wishes for the restoration of her health, in suitable terms to our present situations; and do flatter myself she will not be displeased. A proper person will be employed to deliver it into her own hands, so that I have no disagreeable consequence to apprehend on that account. And now, Ned, having nothing more to pursue, (the Surgeon, you know, has met with his small reward; and Sir Matthew's seems to be approaching) and I intend to make you an early visit;
and

—and if Heaven should prove so gracious as to call the Baronet hence, and afford the most distant probability of Miss Pittborough's avoiding the same fate, you shall not find me an unpleasant companion.

Tom and his wife have quitted Edinburgh incog. ;—and will soon reach your hospitable dome:—Kitty and I lead a whimsical kind of life.—I cannot give you an idea of the hatefulness of her disposition.—I have served her, and yet she seems to consider me as her mortal enemy.—I verily believe the loss of her drummer sits heavy upon her heart, in spite of its natural softness; and that if we had not given him a wife, she would. But whence this flight? Oh, Ned! the fate of this dear, dear woman oppresses me beyond measure:—but I will hope, though perhaps against probability. — If the Baronet should not recover, — how long, how tedious a time must be sacrificed to forms and ceremonies, before I may, with decency, solicit some tender consideration?—Must I constrain

myself not to behold her, when every impediment is removed, — and love no more my involuntary crime?—I know but one means of reconciling myself to the unnatural penance;—I would fly, Ned, to her relations:—Her father, brother, sister, should be mine:—she alone should be the subject of our conversation;—and that conversation would in some measure compensate the imposed absence.



LETTER XXXVII.

Lady SANXSEY to Mrs. BATSON.

I Have, my dear, been greatly, and I will acknowledge, not disagreeably surprised by receiving the inclosed. — This wicked colonel! — But I have reason to rejoice, abundantly rejoice. — Kitty deserved the fate she has incurred; and may it prove equally salutary in the reformation of her conduct,—as my misfortunes have done in mine! O my sister, I foresee what would be the consequence of the
con-

contingence that is so likely to take place !
But it is too late ;—the colonel would a
second time demand my wretched hand too
late,—for death will prove his second rival.

I find not the least amendment in my
own health ; and Sir Matthew's disorder
is so greatly increased, that I know not
but every hour may be his last. He, poor
man, is very impatient !—The tyrant
makes his approach with all his terrors
about him !—His imagination indeed is
infinitely disturbed ; nor have I any reason
to flatter myself with a favourable change.
How have you revived me, by your friend-
ly assurances, that if I do live one week
longer you will reach this gloomy man-
sion, and that both my father and my bro-
ther have determined to accompany you !
—And am I still of such consequence to your
happiness ?—Will not Heaven—I am called
away,—Sir Matthew is just departing.



Six o'clock.

The melancholy scene, my sister, is
over, and Sir Matthew has already attain-

ed the regions of eternity.—He was insensible before I reached him,—and far beyond all possibility of relief or assistance. Alas, my frailty has received a new shock ! —Surely hypocrisy is too odious to be acceptable with you on any occasion ;—and the perpetual unkindness I have experienced, an insuperable bar to affliction or lamentation.—But I was reserved for this last trial of my weakness ; and find myself by no means so detached from the world, as I but half an hour ago imagined.

Come then, my sister, my friend, come and assist me in conquering this amazing reluctance to be dissolved in a nature so decayed ;—teach me to resume the resignation that has so cruelly forsaken me ;—forget the colonel,—and lay myself down in peace. I am the merest memento of mortality you ever beheld ;—yet my heart involuntarily shrinks at the bare thought of that dissolution, it has so long pretended to sigh for as its ultimate happiness. O hasten, Nancy, hasten to me !

I am

I am more than ever undone unless I see your face ! — Pity the confusion this incident has caused me, and sooth me once more into a blessed calm. — This is the last effort of my pen ; — I can no more ; — my nerves are utterly unstrung.



LETTER XXXVIII.

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

MATT has this instant received a letter from his mother. — Sir Matthew is at length no more, — and Miss Pittborough is still permitted to survive him. My heart sinks, my friend, beneath the flattering hope. — She is, — she shall be mine. — Post horses are preparing. — I seek the village you have already visited ; nor will I cease sollicitation, until her sister at least consents to accompany me to her. Not one supporting, not one tenderly assisting friend ! how should she but be lost ! A thousand romantic flights suggest them-

themselves.—I am for assuming now this, now that disguise, in order to introduce myself into her beloved presence, and render myself serviceable to her.—I am more alarmed, more wretched than ever.—The grave even swallows hope itself; then judge of my fate if she should be snatched from me. Had she died instead of Sir Matthew, I think I could have been resigned; but to have her survive,—and survive him only for a short period,—is torture, is madness. My letter could barely have reached her before his departure.—She knows all my proceedings.—Surely she will endeavour to live for my sake.

I am absolutely frantic!—can neither write, nor abstain from it.—But the horses are ready, and I see the probability of a period, at least, to my suspense.

L E T-



LETTER XXXIX.

Mrs. BATSON to Lady SANXSEY.

MY dear sister must not be surpris'd, if we reach her in a few days,—accompanied by a stranger; who, to avoid every offence to decency, will assume a fictitious name; but will on no consideration be restrained from seeing her. I would by no means give a sanction to so unnatural an impropriety, as introducing a professed lover to view the miserable remains of his rival, under any other circumstances; but the colonel's case is so very singular, and his humanity and generosity so great,—that I own I willingly yielded to his importunity, as I was incapable of requiring a self-denial in another, I was conscious I myself could on no account have practis'd.

Should your apprehensions for your health be justly founded, what amends could I make him, for depriving him of
the

the sight of you?—He is scarce rational at present :—we must not overcharge an afflicted mind.

Consider, my dear, the obligations you have to him ; consider the rights of friendship he has to presume upon ;—and every objection must be silenced.

But I will say no more upon a subject that requires so little defence.—You cannot refuse a father's injunctions ; nor hesitate to put your reputation in his hands.

Receive us with the best grace you can assume.—We stand in need of comfort.—Smile us therefore into hope, that an exemption from fatigue, and composure of spirits, may effect more than half your cure.—The colonel has amazing faith in the efficacy of our presence ;—and I trust he will not be disappointed : but if he was not allowed to be an eye-witness of our efforts to save you, no power on earth could convince him, but there had been some deficiency, so industrious are the unhappy to increase their own torments.

L E T.



LETTER XL

Mrs. BATSON to Mrs. HUTCHENS.

DEAR MADAM,

I Doubt not but you are anxious to hear the success of our journey.

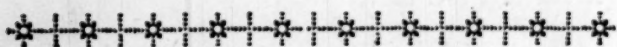
I can venture to tell you my sister does recover, but by such slow degrees, that there is no answering for the event. I do not apprehend her disorder to be a consumption;—she has no cough:—her decay was as imperceptibly as her return to health;—and stole on her so gently,—that loss of appetite and rest alone, awakened her attention to it.

Her youth is all we have to depend upon, and even that is a slender twig. It can be no secret with you, that she has been a very great sufferer.—I wish all the persons concerned against her may repent;—and if she lives, even my forgiveness shall be theirs: but surely no cruelty was ever so unexampled,—as oppressing the unoffending

ing to the very grave ;—for she was incapable of being any one's enemy but her own.

At present her spirits are so tender, and her voice and strength so far gone, that I do not venture to ask her one question ;—but I believe no language but her own, can paint her persecutors in their proper colours ; and even there would be wanting that striking shade, a malignant heart alone is able to give.

Sir Matthew has done her the justice to beg her pardon, and leave her every thing in his power ;—how poor a recompence !—He is dead, however, and my resentment stops at the grave. I am, &c. &c.



L E T T E R XLI.

Colonel DINGLEY to Mr. BROOKSBANK.

A Whole week have I watched over this drooping flower (as described in my last *), yet are my aching eyes unable to perceive an increase of strength.

* This letter is omitted.

—But, Ned, every thing is progressive, from bad to worse, from better to best, there is no standing still;—therefore, as she does not fall off, there is grounds for hope.—If she lives she is mine!—O, death, for once renounce thy nature, and voluntarily forego this one precious victim.

* * * Morn.

She has had a comfortable night; we are all in high spirits.—If ever she is able to try its efficacy,—her native air is pronounced, as a grand specific.—She smiles with ineffable, with the most friendly complacence upon me.—Friendship is love, and love is friendship; I know of no distinction.

Three days have I been writing what you now receive,—as I was determined not to dispatch uncertain intelligence.—She is visibly better, and it is hoped will soon be able to undertake a journey to the village, at least in Revell's machine.—I shall guard my treasure on horseback, with a vigilance love alone is capable of;—you shall hear from me again very soon.



L E T T E R XLII.

From the same.

HARK'E, Ned, I command you to throw open your cellars, to cheer the hearts of your poor neighbours,—and let Tom, my Fanny, and yourself rejoice in the returning happiness of your friend ! —happy beyond the power or possibility of description !

The journey performed beyond our most flattering expectations ;—the kind effects of change of air already strikingly visible in her complexion ;—the music of her voice in a great degree recovered,—and her heart new animated ;—what joy can equal mine ! To behold her thus, thus, thus to converse with her, is it not rapture,—is it not felicity ?—and I with pleasure give that year to form and ceremonies, that has given me once more to life, and unspeakable satisfaction.

4 : 12 : 19
F I N I S.

